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FRIDAY 8 DECEMBER 1995

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'Wilful' Diana caught up in political row

Tory anger at plea for homeless

GLENDY COOPER
and PATRICIA WYNNE DAVIES

The Princess of Wales was caught up in a political row yesterday after she appeared to support a strong attack on government policy on the homeless.

The Princess shared a platform with Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, at a charity meeting during which she condemned the sight of young people who "resort to begging or worse, prostitution, to get money in order to eat". Mr Straw said youth homelessness was a "disgrace", which would be made worse by the Chancellor's cuts in benefit for young people.

Conservative MPs immediately condemned the Princess for breaching the tradition that members of the Royal Family do not get involved in politics. The speech was the Princess's second public engagement in the UK since her *Panorama* interview in which she said she wanted to become an "ambassador" for Britain, but the political furor which broke yesterday will renew doubts about what public role - if any - she should have.

John Major was forced to defend government policy when asked about the comments in the Commons. The Prime Minister said: "We are fully committed to ensuring there is no necessity for some people to sleep rough and we very much hope that the culture that has grown up among some people of doing so is a culture that can change and be broken."

There had been a "remarkable reduction" in the numbers of people sleeping rough, Mr Major said, and plans to cut the numbers to zero continued.

Tory MPs were outspoken in



Sir Patrick Cormack, MP for Shropshire South, called the Princess a "headstrong and wilful young lady", criticising her for going on a platform "in a pre-election period, on a highly contentious subject, with a highly partisan politician". Sir Patrick said the Princess's action was undermined the constitutional impartiality of the monarchy.

Some Tory backbenchers were furious that the Princess's remarks raised the implication that the Government had done nothing to tackle homelessness, whereas the policies were, they said, among the most effective in Europe.

In her comments the Princess revealed that she had visited volunteers and met homeless people.

their condemnation of the Princess's remarks at the annual meeting of the homeless charity, Centrepoint, of which she is patron. John Marshall, MP for Hendon South, said: "I think it is quite wrong that a member of the royal family - however semi-detached - should appear to lend credence to the views of one political party or another."

She described those she had met as "young people whose physical and mental health has been severely damaged by life on the streets. Young people who take drugs to provide some escape from the hardship they face... Young people who have been attacked and abused on the streets and face the indifferent stares of passers-by who have no idea how brave they are or how much they have suffered".

"It is truly tragic to see the total waste of so many young lives - of so much potential."

Centrepoint, which has 30 per cent more bedspaces in its shelters than last year, was doing vital work, the Princess said, but "each year is a struggle to make ends meet... when those needing help are becoming younger and more vulnerable".

Mr Straw told the conference: "Sleeping rough on the streets of Britain is no longer the appalling exception it ought to be."

"Homelessness is an affront to any society which claims to be civilised. Yet the situation of the young homeless seems set to worsen."

The Princess's "extremely powerful and moving" speech was welcomed by Chris Holmes, director of the housing charity Shelter.

"It matters because she said it extremely well and was drawing on her own experience of having seen the work of Centrepoint," he said.

Probe into police intelligence unit

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A top-level police inquiry has been launched into allegations of corruption involving the National Criminal Intelligence Service - Britain's *Bugging* FBI.

It is understood to focus on leaks of confidential information from the service to the criminal fraternity, including details of telephone taps and other material which it is suggested may have compromised investigations by both the NCIS and other police forces.

The seriousness of the investigation is underlined by the fact that it is being headed by John Stevens, Northumbria's Chief Constable - the man who headed the multi-force inquiry into allegations of collusion between terrorist groups and members of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Animal magic nets £40m for pet shop boys

NIGEL COPE

Three men who make their living selling exotic pets including scorpions, tarantulas and chipmunks were £40m richer yesterday when their company made a spectacular debut on the stock market.

Shares in Pet City, which runs 35 out-of-town pet superstores, soared during their first day's dealings, valuing the company at almost £90m.

The flotation means an in-

stant bonanza for the founders who own almost half the company between them. Roger Peder and Giles Clarke started the company in 1989 because they thought there was a gap in the market for the bulk buying of pet food and a fun out-of-town store. The shops sell pet food and pet accessories including doggy waistcoats and other fashion garments. Its "alternative" pets include snakes and iguanas, though its best seller is hamsters. A tarantula

starter kit, including spider cage and heated pad to keep the arachnid warm in chilly winters, will set you back £32.99. A chipmunk starter kit is bit more pricey at £89.99.

However, the stores do not sell cats and dogs as the management feels it would be unfair to display them in a shop.

Customers are directed to animal refuges and dogs homes instead.

The top management are not all pet mad. Richard North-

come from the south Essex area.

"They are people who would put well above the botton rung of the ladder in the criminal fraternity," Det Supt Dibley said.

The bodies were found in Workhouse Lane, on the outskirts of Retford, at 8am yesterday by Ken Jiggins and Peter Theobald, who were on their way to feed pheasants in nearby fields.

Two were in the front of the metallic-blue Range-Rover, registration number F424 NPE, and the third man was in the back. The rear nearside window had been smashed, apparently by a shot.

Mr Jiggins got out of the Land-Rover, which Mr Theobald, 44, who farms the land, was driving and approached the Range-Rover. He

glanced inside, saw the men and not realising they were dead tapped on the window.

He said: "For all the world they looked as though they had fallen asleep in the car. It wasn't until I looked again that I realised they had been shot.

"I was shocked. It was not something I expected to find. The driver was lying with his head on one side and blood coming out of his nose."

The two men called the police who sealed off the murder site, which is 250 yards from the main A130 road from Chelmsford to Southend. The lane is well known to the local criminal fraternity and a hijacked cigarette lorry was taken there six years ago.

Yesterday afternoon the Range-Rover was lifted on to a police low-loader with the bodies still inside it, covered with a tarpaulin, to be taken away for forensic analysis.

Det Supt Dibley said last night that he did not know whether the three men had been killed by a single gunman or whether several killers had been involved. "I believe that the killings took place at the scene," he continued. "There are no real signs in the vehicle of either a struggle or of an attempt by one or more persons to get out of the vehicle."

This tends to suggest that they were either surprised or that whoever did the crime was in the vehicle with them. They may have been forced to drive there at gunpoint."

He appealed for anyone who knew of the Range-Rover's movements between 6pm on Wednesday and 8am yesterday or who knew the owner to contact the police.

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Fertility breakthrough for cancer child

GLENDY COOPER

A three-year-old girl with cancer has made medical history by becoming the youngest patient to have part of her ovary frozen to enable her to have children in adulthood.

Surgeons at St James's Hospital, Leeds, have removed half of Harriet Selka's left ovary and stored it at -200°C in liquid nitrogen so she will have a chance of having children later.

The cancer treatment that Harriet received - a combination of chemotherapy and radiotherapy - left her ovaries slightly damaged.

But doctors say the part of the ovaries that were removed in a 90-minute operation can be frozen for 20 years and may give her the chance to have children that she would otherwise have been denied.

Harriet is the youngest of several girl patients undergoing the pioneering research in Leeds and Manchester and the youngest ever to have part of her reproductive system frozen.

Grants of a quarter of a million pounds from the Leukaemia Research Fund and the Kay Kendall Leukaemia Fund to the research arm of the two Leeds hospitals' Assisted Conception Units have made the surgery possible.

Roger Gosden, Professor of Reproductive Biology at Leeds General Infirmary, who was in charge of Harriet said: "Sometimes people say that reproductive technology is going too far and is on the edge of what is socially acceptable."

"I believe that what we're doing here will be socially acceptable to everyone because we're trying to restore the natural state."

Last night her mother, Elizabeth Selka, said: "Harriet is only one month into the treatment and it is too early to say whether it's going to be a success. But if you have children of your own, you want them to know the joys of having children themselves."

Harriet, of Thurstontown, near Huddersfield, West Yorks, who is suffering from Wilms' tumour, a type of kidney cancer, needs to undergo further surgery in the New Year.

Doctors now hope that the pioneering treatment used on Harriet could be used to help young boys who would be also rendered sterile by cancer treatment.

Hunting for Perfection~



news

Building recovery: Eddie George tells Treasury Committee that caution may benefit economy more in long-term

Bank ready to fight Clarke on rate cut



PAUL WALLACE
and COLIN BROWN

Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, has hinted that he will oppose a cut in interest rates when he meets Kenneth Clarke next Wednesday.

Tory MPs anxiously hoping for a rate cut to fuel the "feel-good factor" after a lacklustre Budget were infuriated by his remarks.

The vice-chairman of the Conservative backbench finance committee of MPs, David Shaw, last night said his committee backed the Chancellor against Mr George's judgement.

The officers of the finance committee are absolutely united in backing the Chancellor's stance on interest rates. All of us believe that by Easter there will be at least one or two small interest rate cuts of one-quarter per cent each."

In evidence to the Treasury Select Committee, Mr George said the Bank was "very conscious of the idea that January is a key month for wage settlements". If the Ford pay offer of 9.5 per cent over two years were to become a benchmark for settlements, it would be "a very serious situation", and this would not become clear until well into January.

Another risk to the inflationary outlook could come from the renewed weakness of the pound, leading to a rise in import prices. Mr George reminded the committee that "the central best guess" of the Bank's *Inflation Report* in November was that inflation was still not on track to meet the Government's target of 2.5 per cent or less in two years' time.

Since that report, the pound has fallen by a further 2 per cent against a basket of currencies. A further concern would be the recent rapid growth in the amount of money in the economy to persist. Mr George told the committee: "We will err

consistently on the side of not taking risks with inflation."

The chairman of the Conservative Party, Brian Mawhinney, gave the clearest hint after the Budget that interest rates would fall, to help fulfil the Government's hopes that the cautious Budget would pave the way for a general election victory.

Cuts in interest rates are vital to the overall strategy for reducing the cost of home loans, putting more money in people's pockets, boosting the housing market, and lifting Tory Party morale.

Senior Tory MPs said the economic fundamentals were sufficiently sound to justify an interest rate cut as early as next Wednesday. But they believe the clash with Mr George is not sufficiently serious to force the Governor into resignation.

Eddie George conceded for the first time that if interest rates had been raised as he requested in May, the economy would have lost even more momentum this year. He said Mr Clarke had been lucky to get away with his decision. "I think it turned out very fortunately for him." Referring to the subsequent rally in the value of the pound, he said: "We were bailed out of that frankly by a change of sentiment to the dollar."

Comment, page 25



Kenneth Clarke: Pressure from backbenchers

New driving licence 'set to act as ID'

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

Britain won the right yesterday to operate a new European credit card-style driving licence as a national identity card.

EU transport ministers endorsed the voluntary introduction of a uniform plastic licence for the 15-member states from July 1996. But Britain requested that the nationality of the bearer should be displayed on the front of the card alongside a photograph, and other data such as name, date of birth, and licence expiry date.

A number of other states voiced hostility to the British plan because of the implications for civil liberties, but agreed to a compromise which allows governments to include nationality or other "non-motorising" information—for example a national insurance number or the fact that the driver is an organ donor—on the back of the card.

They insisted, however, that the inclusion of nationality or other information should be conditional on the written consent of the licence holder.

Then European Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock, pre-empting charges that Brussels was imposing identity cards on Britain through the back door, issued a statement stressing that the primary function of the card is a driving licence.

British officials denied that yesterday's agreement brings closer the introduction of compulsory identity papers. It simply left open the possibility of operating a dual-function

licence/ID card which was one of six options outlined in a Home Office Green Paper last May.

Under existing European directives driving licences do not identify the holder's nationality, so a dual-function card would have been impossible without yesterday's compromise. "If we decide to pursue the introduction of identity cards in Britain, this is now one of the options open to us," a British official said.

The new-style licence will be optional for member states but most, including Britain, are enthusiastic about switching from the existing pink paper version. The EU's 12 gold stars on a blue background will adorn the card, and the back will carry symbols of the various vehicle categories to allow instant recognition throughout the member states.

Earlier plans for the inclusion of a microchip carrying additional information which could be electronically read by police have been scrapped.

■ At Westminster, Graham Allen, Labour's transport spokesman, claimed the decision was a defeat for the Home Secretary Michael Howard, writes John Rentoul.

"This looks like a slight of hand—the Tories were trying to amend an EU proposal to create the basis for introducing a UK identity card by the back door," he said.

He added that the decision means Mr Howard could not bring in the weakest of his plans for what would effectively be an ID card for Britain.

Six horses killed by poison grass

JOHN MCKIE

Six horses—including one belonging to a former Olympic three-day eventer—have died in the past three weeks after eating a fresh batch of thrashed ryegrass, it was revealed yesterday.

The manufacturers of big bale process grass, Eurobale, yesterday admitted they were "surprised" at the deaths and last week spent "thousands of pounds" recalling a batch which they bought from an unnamed farmer in Skengness.

The batch is responsible for the fatal poisoning of the six horses, all of which suffered the symptoms of botulism. Botulism, a usually fatal cause of food poisoning, tends to kill only one horse a year on average in this country.

The first horse to die was at de Montfort University in Lincoln three weeks ago. More than a week later, Alfred, an experienced eventer, died in the Grantham yard of Tiny Clapham, Miss Clapham, a former Olympic rider, is trying to save two of her other horses

which have taken the bale by using an anti-serum available from Guy's Hospital.

Last Wednesday, the 18-year-old cob Blue, belonging to exhibitor Hazel Armstrong-Small, was put down at its home in Epping, Essex. Other horses in Lincolnshire and Kent have also died from the bales.

Nottingham-based horse manufacturers Eurobale, which has produced 1,218 tonnes of forage for race horses and riding stock since 1993, has not previously suffered any problems.

Richard Brooks, who runs the company with his father Geoff, said last night: "We were mortified to discover the deaths and would like to express deep concern for the owners. We always grow our own grass and we only bought from this farmer in July because it was a dry summer. We won't be buying from him again."

Eurobale have sent samples of the tainted grass to the Ministry of Agriculture's agricultural development and advisory service and are cooperating with a full inquiry.

Road chaos as cold sets in for weekend

The cold weather affecting Britain created more chaos on the country's roads and railways yesterday as weather forecasters predicted temperatures would drop further.

Although no new snowfalls are expected, weathermen warned freezing fog was likely to affect much of the country, making driving conditions treacherous.

A spokesman for the London Weather Centre warned of freezing temperatures as low as minus 5C (23F).

"We have had some snow showers in various parts of the country but if it is coming to an end. By tomorrow no fresh snow is likely for a few days.

"The next problem will be freezing fog. There will be some tonight, in eastern and central England, and in Northern Ireland. It will be a real problem especially on Saturday when there will be areas of freezing fog and cold weather," he said.

The south of England took the brunt of the bad weather yesterday with parts of the

coastal region being turned into a "skating rink", according to the AA.

By 4pm yesterday the AA said it had had to rescue 16,500 motorists, with flat batteries and frozen cooling systems mostly to blame.

The RAC said it had dealt with 14,000 emergency calls in a 12-hour period yesterday.

"Approximately a third of those were in London and the Home Counties, where we have been extremely busy," a spokesman said. Motorists were advised not to go out without a blanket and hot flask.



Winter coat: Weathermen predict temperatures of -5C

Judge to rule on railways' future

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The future of rail privatisation will be decided in the High Court today when a judge rules on whether the Government was wrong to allow potential cuts in services.

Yesterday, in a legal challenge to privatisation, Nigel Pleming QC, for the anti-privatisation group Save Our Railways, said that the franchising director, Roger Salmon, should not have set minimum service levels for new operators which were well below the present timetable. Mr Pleming said that the then Secretary of State, John MacGregor, had issued clear instructions in March 1994 that the service levels should be broadly the same before and after franchising.

However, when Mr Salmon, who acts under the direction of the Secretary of State for Transport, had drawn up "Passenger Service Requirements" (PSRs) for the first lines to be franchised, they required operators only to run a percentage of ex-

isting trains. Mr Pleming read out a number of letters from rail passengers and campaigners who had analysed the new PSRs and in many cases the proposed services were well below those currently run by British Rail.

Mr Pleming said that when the Railways Bill was being debated in Parliament in 1993 the message from the Government was: "Don't worry about existing levels of services. When we franchise, the existing level at that time will be the level that is franchised. Trust us on this."

The emphasis of guidelines and instructions given to Mr Salmon was on getting value for money and on flexibility.

Mr Justice Macpherson will give his judgment this afternoon and has said it will apply to all seven of the first franchises.

If Save Our Railways is successful, Mr Salmon will have to postpone his announcement of the successful bidders, which is scheduled for next Tuesday, and the Government may be forced to start the whole franchising process from scratch, causing months of delays.

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IN BRIEF

Howard set to deny Bridgewater appeal

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is "minded not" to refer the case of the "Bridgewater Four" back to Court of Appeal—but no final decision has been taken, the Home Office said last night.

In a statement, the Home Office said the convicted men's solicitors had been notified of Mr Howard's "provisional conclusions" not to refer and they now had an opportunity to respond.

Michael Hickey, 33, Vincent Robinson, 41, and James Robinson, 61, have protested their innocence since their convictions in 1979 for murdering newspaper delivery boy Carl Bridgewater. Carl, 13, was shot dead when he interrupted a burglary at a pub near Stourbridge, West Midlands, the previous year.

The confession of Patrick Molloy, who was convicted of manslaughter, was crucial to the case. Molloy died in 1981, claiming he had been forced into making the confession.

DPP conviction

Bernard Enner, 17, was convicted of stabbing John Mills, 57, the husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills, in a mugging by a gang of six youths near Regent's Park, central London. Enner, who admitted possessing the knife used in the attack in May, was found guilty of unlawful wounding and robbery. Sentence was adjourned. Mr Mills suffered a severed artery.

Flu cases rise

Flu and flu-like illnesses rose to 178 cases per 100,000 of the population at the end of last week from 139/100,000 the week before, the Royal College of General Practitioners' flu monitoring bureau in Birmingham said. The threshold for an epidemic is 400/100,000.

Guppy freed

Darren Guppy, 29, was freed on conditional bail after being given leave to appeal against a jail term for refusing to pay compensation for the bogus gems robbery in New York that netted him £1.8m from Lloyd's insurers. Guppy, of Notting Hill, west London, has served five years for the false raid but was given three months to compensate insurers £227,000 or face a further three years jail.

'Ma Huggett' dies

Actress Kathleen Harrison, who played Ma Huggett opposite Jack Warner in the popular radio series *The Huggetts*, died aged 103 at her London home. She was also well known for her role as a cockney charlady in the Sixties' television series *Mrs Threepwood*.

Dancer charged

A ballet dancer alleged to have punched a ballerina backstage has been charged with assault. A report on Robert Hampton, 32, principal dancer with the Scottish Ballet, has been sent to the procurator fiscal following a complaint from Catarina Lapin, 25, that she was assaulted in October during a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Edinburgh.

Lesson in success

Stratford School, in Newham, east London, scene of a bitter battle between its head teacher and governors three years ago, has been given a clean bill of health by inspectors. The opted-out school was found to be failing in 1994. Since then the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A-C grades at GCSE has risen from 4 to 28 percent.

Cellnet at

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news

MP's libel case: Tory 'confessed he was homosexual' as his 29-year marriage fell apart, court is told

Ashby's wife tells of 'abuse and rejection'

REBECCA FOWLER

As a public airing of the private nightmare of a marriage, it had the lot. The wife of Tory MP David Ashby told a libel jury how he physically abused her, refused sex, and eventually confessed he was a homosexual.

Silvana Ashby, 53, who spoke in a hoarse Italian accent, told the jury yesterday that she felt constantly rejected by her husband. On one occasion, she said, he held a pillow over her face after an argument, and he said she should book appointments if she wished to talk to him.

Mrs Ashby was giving evidence against her husband in his libel case against the *Sunday Times* and Andrew Neil, its former editor. Mr Ashby denies he is a homosexual.

When the couple agreed to separate in October 1993, Mrs Ashby tearfully told the court, her husband said he had had a brief encounter with a man some years ago on a holiday in the Seychelles, and confessed he was gay. "I used to say to him you're different, I don't understand you any more. You've changed, that like you like the company of men, more than women," Mrs Ashby said.

"He came into the kitchen and said 'I've got to tell you something, I have changed', and he started to cry ... I said to him 'if you change once, can't you change again?' He said 'it's not as easy as that'. When she asked what he meant, he said 'I had an encounter many years ago. Then I put it out of my mind and now I can't'.

Fighting back tears, Mrs Ashby told the court: "I was in no doubt he was telling me he was homosexual." She denied she had used words like "poof" or "poofier" to her husband.

Asked about her reaction to what her husband had told her, she said: "In a way I was pleased, because I knew there was nothing wrong with me. I



Alleged relationship: David Ashby (left) and Dr Ciaran Kilduff

had thought for years that I was a terrible person and that that was why he didn't like me."

As Mr Ashby sat on the other side of the courtroom, often resting his head in his hands,

Mrs Ashby, dressed in a pale blue jumper and pearls, clutched a handkerchief and told the jury how her marriage fell apart.

The couple met on a skiing holiday in 1964, and both described it as "love at first sight". They spoke in French because neither understood the other's native tongue.

They married in a Roman Catholic church the following year and Mrs Ashby moved from Italy to Chelsea.

But Mrs Ashby said she was isolated by her husband, a barrister, from the start of their marriage. "He was always at work, and at weekends he was out playing rugby."

"I couldn't speak the language, I had no friends, no rel-

atives here. I said to my husband 'can you be at home more?' he said 'I'll buy you a dog instead'."

When Mr Ashby became MP for Leicestershire North-West in 1983, Mrs Ashby said he told her she was now irrelevant to him. "He said 'remember for you I am dead, I don't exist for you any more. I will dedicate myself to my work'."

Mrs Ashby also described her sex life as "not very satisfactory" to Richard Hardley QC for the *Sunday Times*. At first she said she took Mr Ashby's indifference to her affections as typical English coldness, but she did not become aware he was homosexual until later.

When Mr Ashby left her in 1993, after 28 years of marriage, to live in a flat in Putney, Mrs Ashby believed he was having an affair with his neighbour, Dr Ciaran Kilduff, 32. Both men deny physical intimacy.

But Mrs Ashby said she still loved her husband. "If you love someone you trust them fully, and I loved David more than my life," she said. "I still do."

The case continues.



Silvana Ashby: 'He'd say make an appointment if you want to talk to me'

Mental patients to be treated with art

DECCA ATKENHEAD

Patients with mental health problems are to be prescribed painting, sculpting and creative writing on the NHS, instead of drugs. "Arts On Prescription", a radical new scheme launched this week, will enable doctors to treat depression and anxiety by sending chronic sufferers to art classes.

A pilot scheme is to begin in various economically deprived areas of Manchester. Participating GPs, consultants, community psychiatric nurses and social workers will refer patients who suffer from mental health complaints like panic attacks to an Arts and Mental Health Nurse. The patients will then be offered a range of art classes, from drama and dance to ceramics and photography, and, after consultation, be prescribed a 10-week course.

Like any other NHS medical treatment, the art classes will be free. Annual costs of £10,000 will be met jointly by Stockport Health Authority and the local council.

"People find these sorts of expressive activities, done in a group, give them a chance to develop their confidence and self-esteem, and give them a social contact at a level they are comfortable," a community mental health team spokeswoman said.

"Mental ill-health is a huge burden on the NHS, and shows itself through many physical and mental problems. This treatment gets us out of looking at everything from a problem-based viewpoint."

A typical patient, she said, would be a woman with a family and little time to herself, struggling with relationship difficulties and suffering from low self-esteem, insomnia and lack of motivation. "You can give her a dose of Prozac and hope she'll get better, but you are never going to solve the problem unless you tackle how she deals with her life."

The severely disturbed and suicidal will not be eligible for the classes, to be taught by artists with no medical training in local church halls and social clubs. Schizophrenics and manic depressives in a stable condition may take part, though.

Arts On Prescription was inspired by an earlier Manchester project, *Exercise On Prescription*, where GPs prescribed free sessions in the gym or the swimming pool to patients with coronary problems. Participants reported that the greatest improvements had been to mental rather than physical well-being, and demand grew for arts-based activities.

New wheelie-bins give pensioners a clean break

GLENDIA COOPER

A growing number of elderly people in West Yorkshire are in hospital with broken limbs after falling into new council wheelie-bins.

In Pontefract, where the large grey bins replaced conventional dustbins several months ago, there has been a "significant" rise in wheelie-bin related incidents. Bridget Gill, marketing manager of the infirmary, said that there were three ways in which old people were injuring themselves. "Many people fractured their wrists by standing on something and then leaning

into the bin and toppling over on to it," she said.

"There was one chap who clambered into a bin to stamp down the rubbish and fractured his ankle in the process."

Ms Gill said that elderly people had been disregarding the guidance: "They were told not to put themselves in a position of danger. They were simply not following instructions."

She did not know why Pontefract had become a hot spot for wheelie-bin victims. "It may well be prevalent in other places but maybe they don't talk about it so much," she suggested.

John Skidmore, Wakefield's cleansing services manager, said he was "not aware of any particular problems regarding injuries to members of the public as a result of the wheelie-bin system of refuse collection".

He stressed that the public must follow instructions given to clean their bins safely, but said that anyone with a particular problem should contact their wheelie-bin helpline.

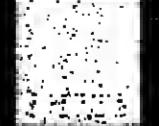
Whether that is before or after they end up in the bin, he did not specify.

A detail from Wakefield council's leaflet on wheelie-bins

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Health trends: Medical advances are increasing life expectancy without reducing the risk of illness or disability in old age

A longer life in sickness not in health

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

British men and women are living longer but their extra years of life may be far from productive, marred by poor health and disability, according to new research.

In contrast to steady increases in life expectancy over the past 20 years, healthy life expectancy – the number of years people can expect to enjoy good health – has stayed the same or risen only slightly.

A report from the Office of Population Censuses & Surveys (OPCS) says that for men aged 65, healthy expectancy remained almost constant between 1976 and 1992 at about seven years. For women aged 65, there was an increase of just one year between 1988 and 1992 from 9 to 10 years.

Karen Dunnell, an OPCS health statistician, said that although men reaching pensionable age can now expect to live until 79 and women to 83, the findings had serious implications for the planning of health and social care. The "extra years of life gained by the elderly are extra years with a disability, not extra years of healthy life", she says.

Overall, the report, "Are we healthier?" in the winter issue of *Population Trends*, produces conflicting data on changes in the general health of the population over a 20-year period.

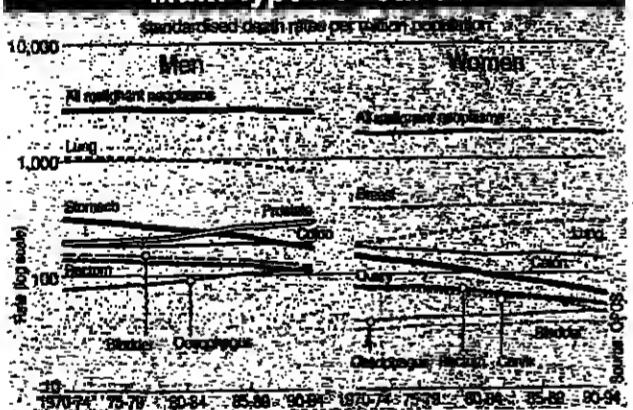
There are indications of a decline in mortality from all causes for those aged under 20 and 45 and over. But this is countered by little improvement in mortality from all causes for those aged 20-44.

Deaths from heart disease

poor health, including smoking



Main types of cancer



Breast cancer study shows link to stress

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

The most clear-cut evidence yet that stress can cause cancer has come from a study of more than 100 women from the breast cancer clinic and screening unit at King's College Hospital, London.

When the women were questioned about their past life before the diagnosis was made, it was found that almost half of those who proved to have the disease had undergone one or more "adverse life events" in the previous five years.

Among those who proved disease-free, however, less than one-fifth had suffered similarly. Seven events, among other things, were defined as including bereavement, being made redundant or bankrupt, becoming homeless, being mugged or having a son or daughter arrested.

The findings suggest that a link between life stress and cancer may indeed exist, the team from the Institute of Psychiatry and King's College Hospital conclude in this week's *British Medical Journal*.

Hormonal responses to stress may affect the body's immune system, the study team speculate.

are falling, while deaths from stroke have declined dramatically. However, there is little change in cancer fatalities overall, despite improvements in deaths from stomach, bladder, pancreatic and rectal cancers in men, and cervical and bowel cancers in women.

In families from skilled backgrounds, 29 per cent of girls smoke and 28 per cent of boys. Where the parents are professionals, 21 per cent of boys smoke and 22 per cent of girls are smokers.

Alcohol consumption stabilised in men with the number drinking above the weekly recommended limit of 21 units set at around 27 per cent (1992). But in women, the proportion drinking 14 units rose 2 or 3 per cent between 1984 and 1992 and now stands at 11 per cent.

Ms Dunnell concluded that at a simple level it appears people are healthier because of improving mortality rates and greater life expectancy. "However, surveys of reported and measured health status suggest there is no comparable general improvement in health."

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The report confirms the growing number of obese people despite health education efforts to change eating habits. In 1980, 6 per cent of men aged 16 to 64 were obese; by 1993, the figure had risen to 13 per cent.

In women, obesity doubled from 8 per cent in 1980 to 16 per cent by 1993. The number of men who are overweight has risen from 33 per cent in 1980 to 43 per cent in 1993. For women, there has been an increase from 24 per cent to 30 per cent.

Other behaviours related to poor health, including smoking

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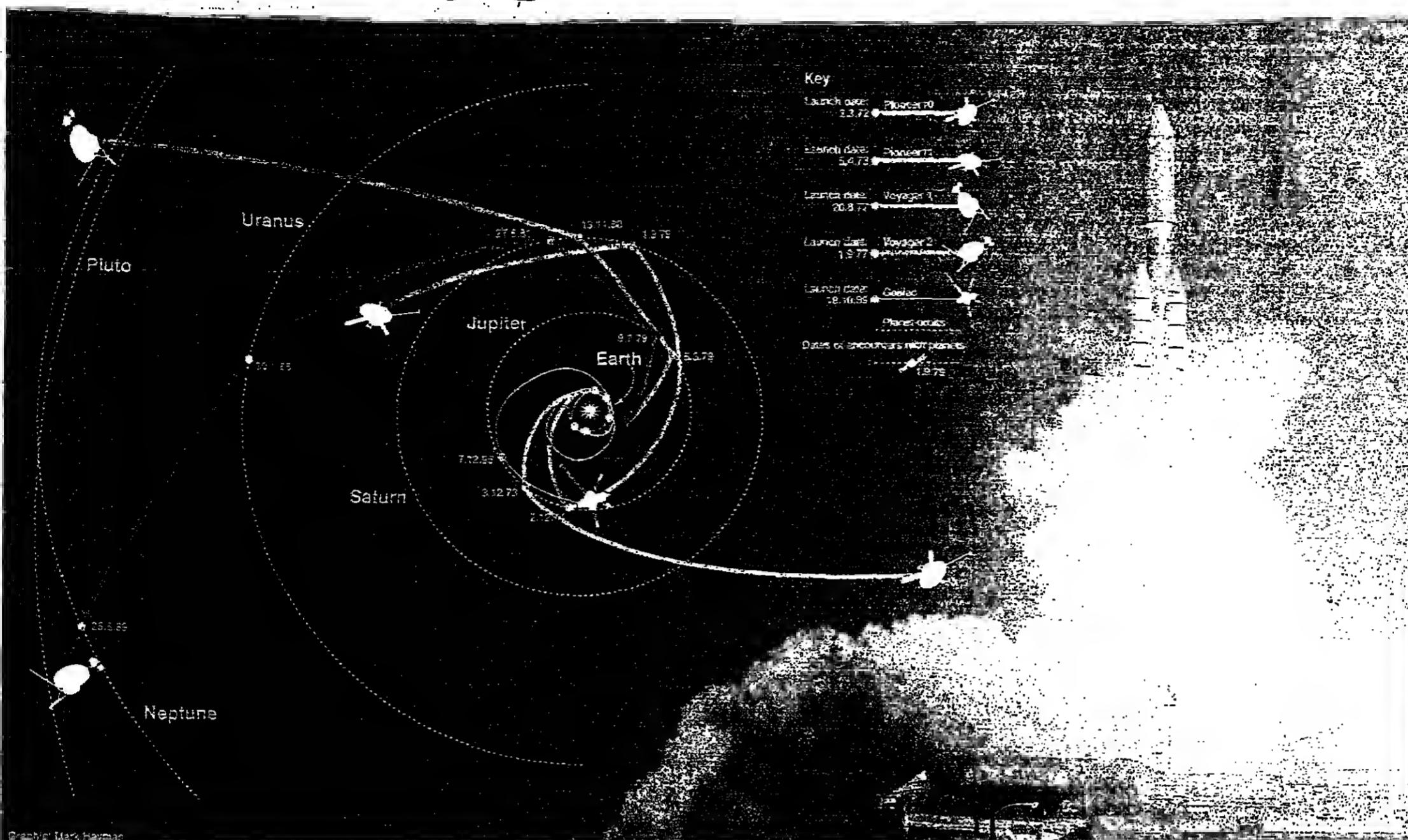
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Galileo boldly goes to the limit of science



The final frontier: Nasa's latest space probe is leading the way to a new understanding of our Solar System

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

For six years, the Galileo space mission to Jupiter has been totally alone in the void of space. Now, at the end of its 23-billion-mile odyssey, it has company – in the form of the solar system's largest planet, its faint rings, and its 16 known moons.

The space probe's extraordinary travels involved interplanetary snooker, with Galileo looping round Venus once, then heading back to Earth twice to gain enough gravitational en-

ergy to carry it across the 360 million miles between the earth's orbit and that of Jupiter. It has twice come close to asteroids, the tiny planetoids which tend to lie between the orbit of Mars and Jupiter. But although it is the first man-made probe to examine Jupiter in detail, Galileo is not the first to fly past the planet. The Voyager and Pioneer missions have been to the outer planets before. And, bizarrely, on 2 December, the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (Soho) took off aboard an Atlas rocket from the Kennedy Space Centre. After a four-

month journey covering 1.5 million kilometres, this European Space Agency satellite will take up a unique orbit – not around a planet or the Sun directly – but around the "Lagrangian point" the spot where the gravitational pull of Earth and that of the Sun balance each other out. From this vantage point, it will look at the restless solar surface and listen for internal "sun-quakes".

Soho will be followed in May 1996 by Cluster, a quartet of little satellites which, in orbit around Earth, will also be ex-

amining the effects of the Sun as the solar wind – the continuous stream of ionised gas emitted by the Sun – hits Earth's magnetic field.

Perhaps the strangest path of all is that taken by the ESA probe, known as Ulysses, which was launched from the shuttle Discovery on 6 October 1990. In order to look at the Sun, it was sent away from the Sun towards Jupiter. Ulysses sped out to a rendezvous with the planet two years later and used the planet's gravity to shoot up out of the flat disc in

which all planets orbit the Sun. But the Voyager and Pioneer spacecraft have had the longest journeys and are now the most distant man-made objects in the universe. Launched on 2 March 1972, Pioneer 10 was the first of the Jupiter missions. Pioneer 11 followed a year later. The two Voyagers were sent up within a couple of days of each other in 1977. By the late 1970s, the outermost planets of the Solar System were lined up in a curve, so that spacecraft could visit them one after another. Voyager 1 passed Jupiter in March

1979 and Saturn in 1980. Voyager 2 visited Jupiter in July 1979, Saturn in 1981, Uranus in 1986, and Neptune in 1989.

They are all now leaving the bounds of the Solar System and passing from interplanetary to interstellar space. They may yet yield one final piece of scientific information.

Some scientists believe there might be a 10th planet beyond the orbit of Pluto. It may reveal its gravitational pull by deflecting the trajectories of these distant craft from what is expected. But after that, nothing.

MoD rapped over official's fraud

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

Ministry of Defence officials were hauled over the coals by a powerful committee of MPs yesterday for lapses that led to one of the biggest ever frauds in Whitehall.

The Commons Public Accounts Committee said the case of Gordon Foxley, the former head of ammunition procurement at the MoD, jailed for taking £1.3m and probably much more, in bribes from three foreign defence manufacturers anxious to secure orders, was "one of the worst cases of corruption" it had examined.

Mr Foxley had several houses, both in Britain and abroad, and luxury cars, yet the MoD failed to spot anything amiss.

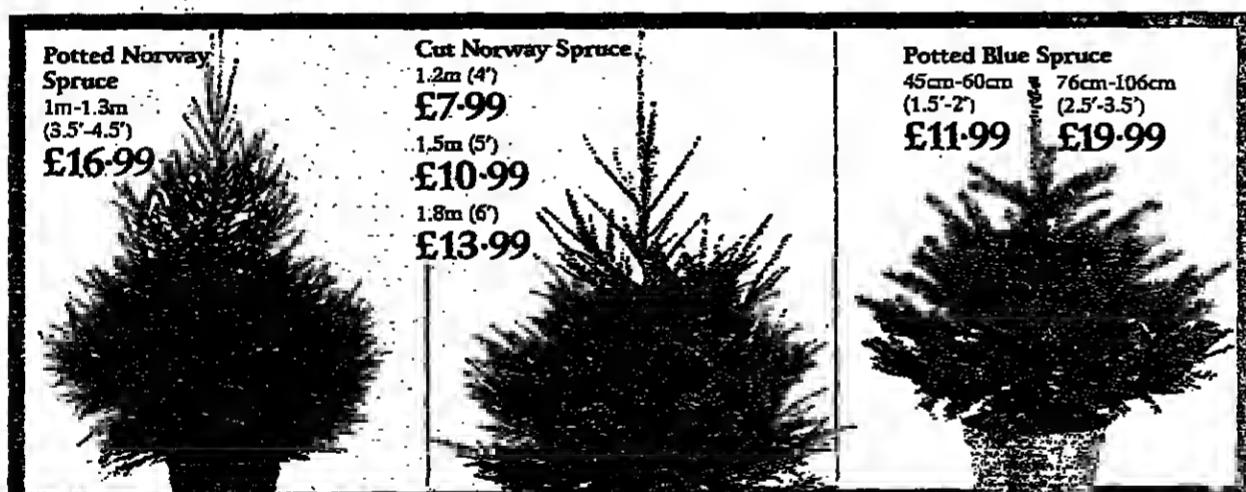
"We are concerned that the Department's vetting arrangements failed to identify the lavish nature of Gordon Foxley's lifestyle," the committee said. As a priority, it recommended the Government should introduce the same vetting arrangements for officials in a position to benefit from fraud as already applied to those who could pose a threat to national security.

Procurement staff had been in their jobs for a long period, said MPs, which "can increase the risk of fraud". Postings of five years, or even less, should be the norm. Where that was impossible, management checks should be strengthened.

The Foxley affair is still being investigated by MoD police. The full extent of his corruption is still not known – something MPs found hard to stomach.

They urged the MoD to redouble its efforts to identify all the bribes he received – the police think he received far more than £1.3m – and to gain access to his Swiss bank accounts.

MoD claims that total fraud of £22m in the last decade was small, in the context of a total defence budget of £23bn, failed to impress the all-party group of MPs. "We are concerned that in absolute terms very large amounts are involved."



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politics

Monetary union: Prime Minister says nothing can be ruled out

Major keen to retain an option on EMU

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

John Major yesterday reaffirmed his intention not to rule out British membership of EMU in the next Parliament despite strong pressure from Tory right-wingers to do so.

Although there are mounting doubts among senior British politicians in both the main parties about the likelihood of the 1999 timetable for a single currency being met, the Prime Minister said in the Commons it was "still" Government policy not to rule out British membership in the next Parliament.

The Prime Minister's declaration, in exchanges with Tony Blair, the Labour leader, followed his remarks in an interview with the *Independent* last month that he did not want to "surrender" his influence in negotiations in Europe on the consequences of EMU for countries outside as well as inside a single currency.

The prospect of a White Paper, setting out Britain's negotiating position for the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference on the EU's future further increased yesterday when Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, told the Commons that ministers were now actively considering whether to publish one early next year.

Mr Major's remarks came a week ahead of the Madrid summit, at which Mr Major is expected to press his case that the economic results for countries outside EMU – including the possibility of competitive devaluations – have not been sufficiently thought through.

It also comes on the eve of a fresh campaign by John Redwood, the former Welsh Secretary and Mr Major's leadership challenger in the summer, to persuade the Gov-

ernment to make a further gesture towards the Euro-sceptic right, by explicitly pledging that a Tory government would not join a single currency in the next Parliament.

Mr Major has frequently cast doubt on the likelihood of a single currency before the end of the century. On the Labour side both Mr Blair, and in a BBC Radio interview yesterday, Robin Cook, his foreign affairs spokesman, have also suggested the 1999 timetable could well slip. Mr Cook suggested on the *Today* programme that delay might well be necessary in order to meet the widened economic convergence criteria which a Labour government would be seeking.

Although some ministers on the right believe that further discussions on the subject will have to take place within the Cabinet – and that the Prime Minister could still in the end make such a pledge – Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, is thought to be strongly opposed to such a move. Mr Major is said at present to accept the argument that it would lessen British influence over an issue which is of fundamental importance, even if the UK stays out of EMU.

After saying that Mr Major had made a "very important statement" by not ruling out membership, Mr Blair pressed the Prime Minister to say whether that was the "position of the whole of your Government, including the Euro-sceptic members of the Cabinet". Mr Major replied: "Of course it is the position of the whole Government."

John Stevens, Tory MEP for Thames Valley, said in London yesterday said yesterday "monetary union is the test of whether Europe is serious about being competitive."

Lethal weapon: Victoria Moule, who is recovering from being seriously injured in a collision involving a vehicle fitted with bull bars, in central London yesterday at the launch of a Labour Party campaign to ban what it describes as a 'dangerous fashion accessory'

Photograph: Gervais Lewis

Heath defies party's Euro-sceptics

Sir Edward Heath yesterday swanned the Prime Minister that the task of negotiating for Britain would be made "impossible" if the Government bowed to the Euro-sceptics and issued a White Paper on Europe.

Reinforcing the belief that the Tory sceptics are now the tail that wags the Government dog, within hours of Sir Tedd Taylor commanding the idea of a White Paper on the *Today* programme, John Major told the Commons he was considering publishing one.

The document would set out Britain's position on the various issues to come before next year's Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) on the future of the European Union.

But in a trenchant speech in which he also called for speedy

creation of a single currency, Sir Edward appealed to the Prime Minister "under no circumstances" to make a statement on the British position. "I have had many, many years of international negotiations and five years of negotiating in Europe. It is impossible for any prime minister to lay down before hand what he is going to do."

Sir Edward said there was a long tradition, "broken in recent years", of ministers negotiating what they thought was an acceptable deal and then bringing it back for MPs' approval. "If they are not approved, that's the end of the government."

Sir Edward backed the social chapter and the minimum wage – the effect of both had been "grossly exaggerated" – and membership of a European single currency.

as Sir Edward deplored the readiness to be "isolated" about which the Secretary of State had boasted.

"We are kidding ourselves if we say they all want to do what we're doing. It couldn't be further from the truth. They are saying just how lucky they are to be saved from it."

Within the Tory party, however, it is Sir Edward who is looking increasingly isolated. He said that ever since its creation the community had moved forward in considerable leaps, and it would do so on the currency. "The sooner this is done the better."

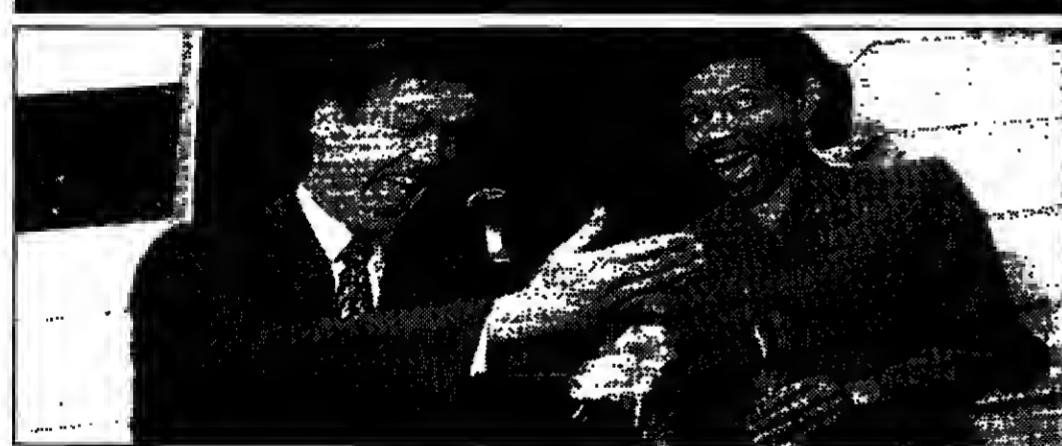
Within the IGC agenda due for discussion at the Madrid summit next week, Mr Rifkind said it was clear that if monetary union was to go ahead on 1 January 1999, only a minority of states would be ready. The Conservatives are anti-Euro, very far from it," she insisted.

"Therefore there is a crucial need for work to begin now, not in 1997 or 1998, as to what will be the implications for the relationship between the 'ins' and the 'outs' in such a situation.

On the vexed business of a single currency, Mr Rifkind said it was clear that if monetary union was to go ahead on 1 January 1999, only a minority of states would be ready. The Conservatives are anti-Euro, very far from it," she insisted.

A spokesman for the Department of National Heritage said the Government had taken a "tough" row at tackling football hooliganism.

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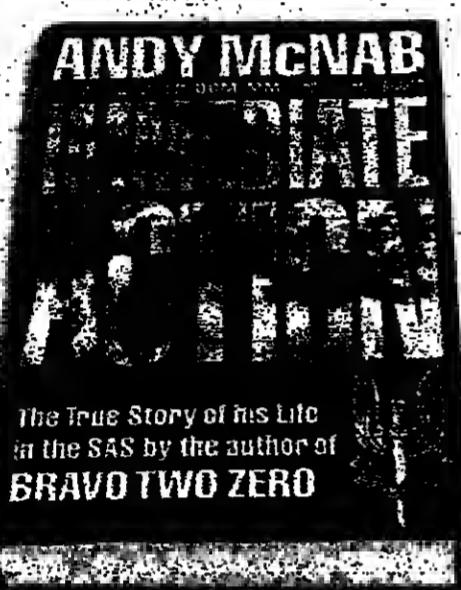
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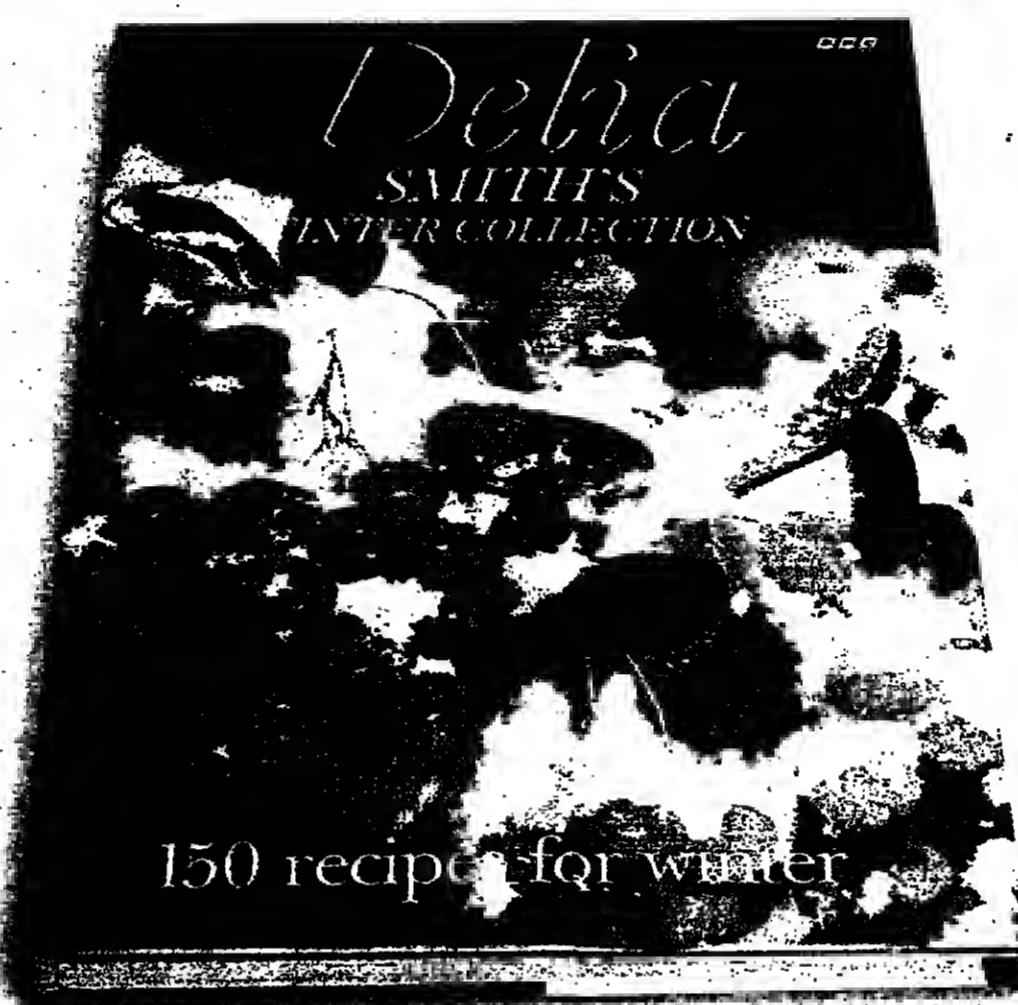
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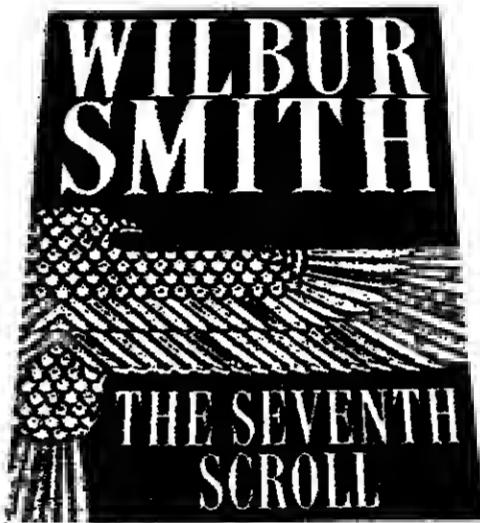
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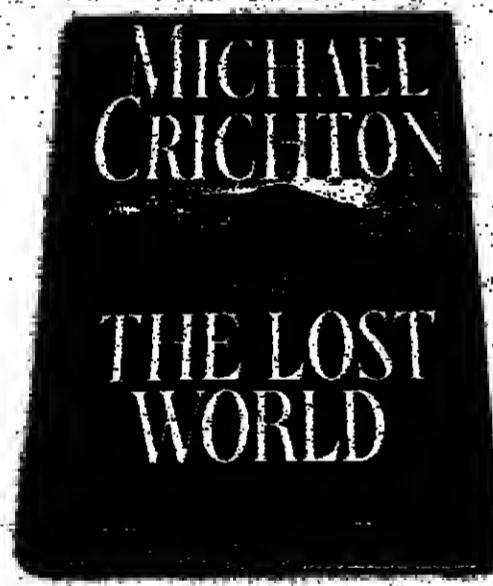
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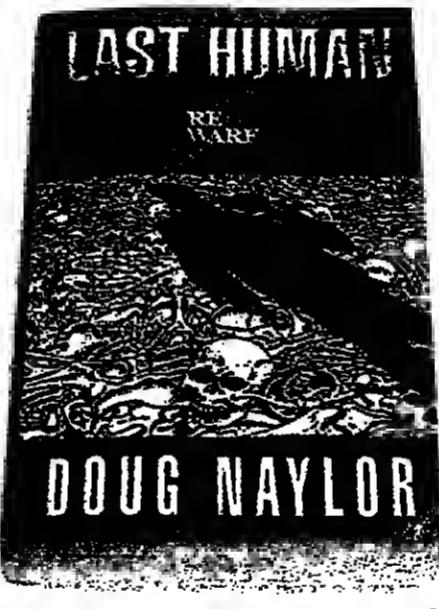
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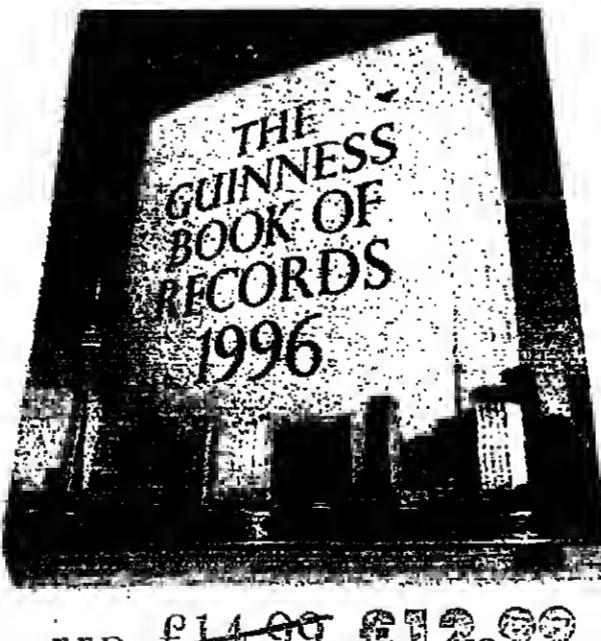
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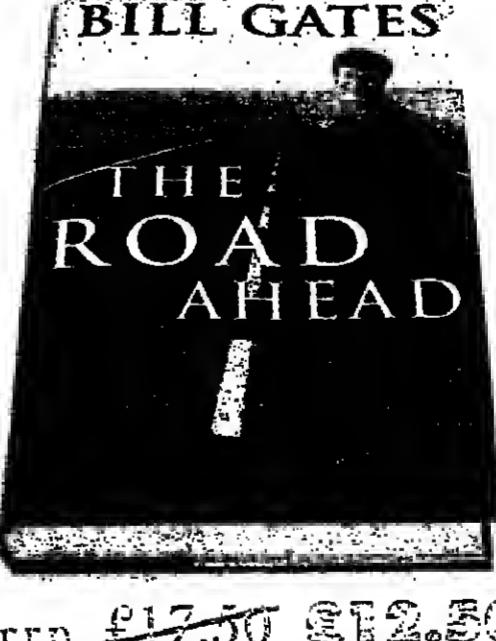
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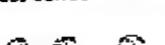
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Bosnia accord: Focus shifts to London as ministers gather to determine strategy for implementing agreement



Order of the boot: A militiaman tramples a US flag during a demonstration yesterday in a Serbian suburb of Sarajevo in protest against the peace plan which transfers control to the Muslim-led government. Photograph: AP

Nations seek to shore up peace

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Diplomatic Editor
ADRIAN BRIDGE
Budapest

Foreign ministers will mount an informal effort to resolve the dispute between Serbia and Croatia over the region of eastern Slavonia at the Peace Implementation Conference on the former Yugoslavia, opening in London today.

The discussions are expected to take place in the margins of formal sessions on the military and civilian efforts to carry out the Dayton peace accords, which set out the terms for an end to the war in Bosnia.

European ministers are keen to use the opportunity also to defuse the issue of eastern Slavonia, a border area of Croatia occupied by separatist Serbs. Under the Dayton formula the region is to be ruled by an international authority for up to two years, after which time it will revert to Croatian sovereignty. But the process could be delayed by the absence of any agreement to protect the status of Serbs remaining in the area, and there are also other areas of disagreement.

"The eastern Slavonia ques-

tion could still set off a war between Serbia and Croatia unless it is resolved," said a Western diplomat, "and it is the kind of side issue that could disrupt the whole settlement in Bosnia".

The ministers will also be expected to agree on a new structure of military and civilian relations in the international effort in Bosnia, hoping to avoid the bureaucratic conflicts which bedevilled the failed United Nations mission.

Although discussions on military arrangements are taking place at Nato in Brussels, the London conference is certain to provide a forum for political discussions to surface, particularly between France and the US.

The French government, whose troops will man the Sarajevo sector, has already expressed concern over the provision in the Dayton accords for the Muslim-led government to take over Serb suburbs of the capital. While partly fed by worries over the fate of two French airmen presumed to be in Serb hands, the issue could still cause sharp disagreement among the Western allies.

The foreign ministers are likely to agree on the appointment of the European Union

negotiator, Carl Bildt, as the first High Representative to co-ordinate civilian relief, reconstruction, the protection of human rights and the holding of elections.

The 53-nation Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) met yesterday in Budapest to discuss its mandate to supervise the preparation and conduct of elections for the presidency and legislature of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The polls are to be held within six to nine months of the formal signature of peace agreement in Paris on 14 December.

"We have never taken on anything like this before," said a Western delegate. "Success would greatly enhance the OSCE's credibility. But if we fail it could all be called into question." Another said: "The Clinton administration has put itself on the line with this peace plan. They do not want it to be an empty piece of paper – particularly if US troops are going to be getting involved."

The OSCE plans to establish offices throughout the Muslim-Croat and Serb areas of Bosnia. A \$24.5m budget has been earmarked, and it will employ 200-300 monitoring experts.

UN looks on as Croats burn and loot homes

Sarajevo (Reuters) — The United Nations yesterday defended its failure to intervene in parts of Bosnia where Croat forces are systematically burning and looting towns, and said it did not think UN troops, in similar circumstances, would get involved.

British forces currently deployed in these areas as UN peace-keepers will remain on the ground for Nato when it deploys later this month.

"If you look at our mandate, our interpretation is we were not sent here to stop civil populations burning down their own houses," said Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Vernon, the UN spokesman.

About 60,000 Nato combat troops are scheduled to be deployed in Bosnia to implement a peace plan initiated in Dayton, Ohio, last month and due to be signed in Paris next Thursday. Nato will bring bigger guns, better armour and artillery and more robust rules of engagement, mostly for defensive purposes.

With the UN packing up and Nato just arriving, Bosnia has been left to its own devices – with predictable consequences. The Croats have burned down 40 per cent of Mrkonjic Grad and Spivo, towns scheduled to revert to Serb control after the peace plan is signed. The arson and looting is being carried out by uniformed soldiers, much of it under the eyes of British troops whom the UN has ordered to observe but not to interfere.

Bosnian Serb leaders, some of them indicted war criminals supposed to have stepped down under the Dayton deal, are rejecting the agreement as it calls for them to hand Sarajevo's northern and western suburbs to government control.

Serb troops are also blocking UN-escorted civilian convoys to Gorazde, in defiance of a pledge made in October in exchange for a halt to Nato air strikes. And Serbs are continuing to drive Muslims from their homes – 60 families this week alone in the Brusa Luk region – despite the fact that the Dayton accord "guarantees" the right of minorities to stay in their property.

"Nato will be in an invidious position no matter what it does," said a relief worker. "If it lets the locals take things into their own hands, hardline Croats and Serbs will scuttle its Dayton agreement. If Nato tries to become an occupying force, which may be what is necessary to make the deal work, it could well get sucked into the quagmire it vowed to avoid."

■ Washington (AP) — Nearly half the House of Representatives signed a letter to President Bill Clinton opposing the deployment of US troops to Bosnia, even as he formally ratified Congress yesterday that the first Americans had landed. In their one-sentence letter, 184 members – 171 Republicans and 13 Democrats – wrote: "We urge you not to send ground troops to Bosnia."

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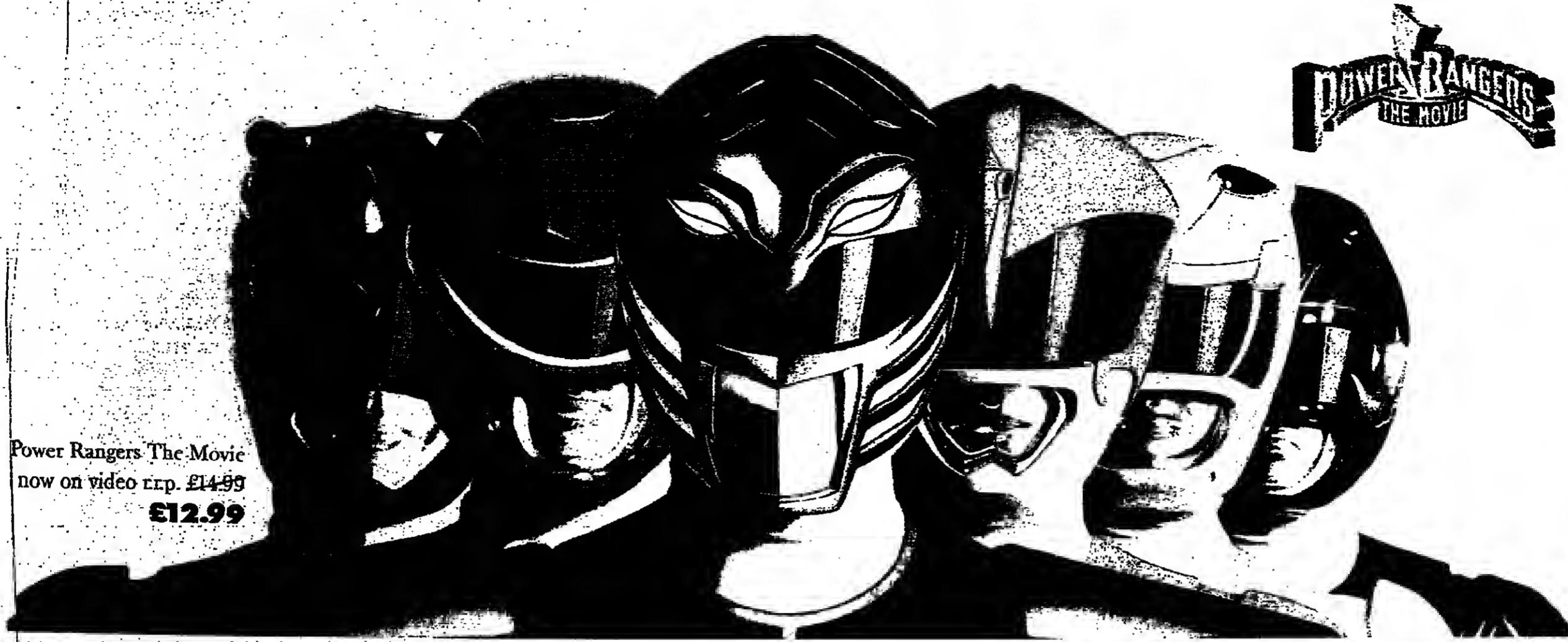
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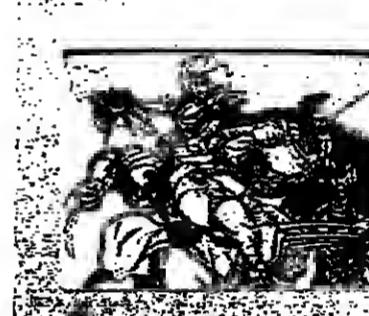
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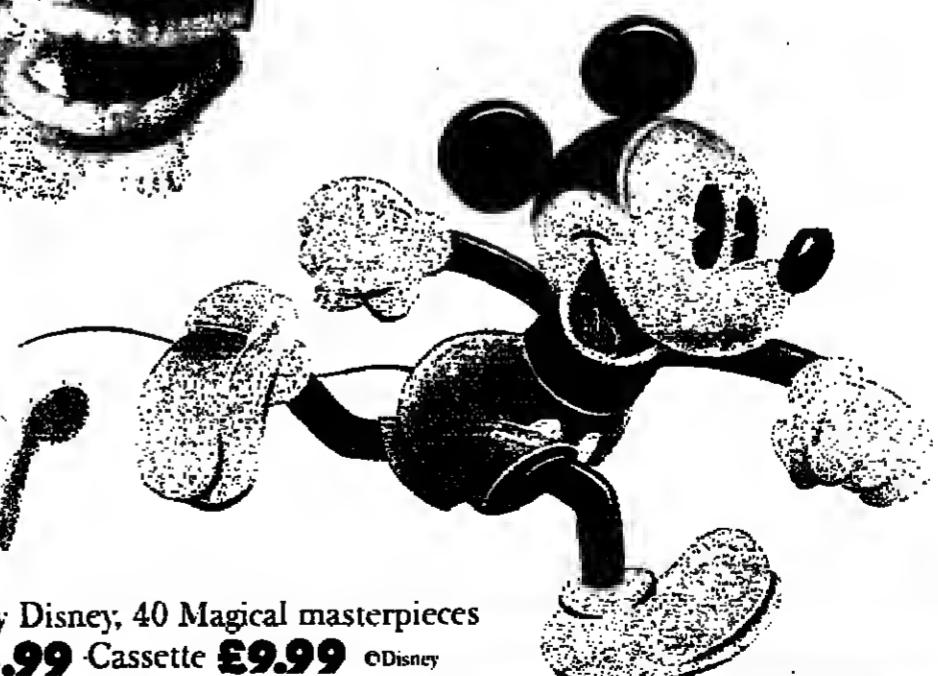
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international

Russian elections: Hit hard by privatisation, the professional classes are wooed by a whizz-kid economist and a former PM

Reformers face legacy of hate

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

Had Mikhail Gorbachev allowed the whizz-kid economist Grigory Yavlinsky to try out his ambitious plan to privatise the Soviet economy in 500 days, Mr Yavlinsky would hardly be the popular politician he is today. But the father of *perestroika* delayed introducing economic reform, passing the buck to Boris Yeltsin and his chosen young economist, Yegor Gaidar.

Mr Gaidar and his team plunged in – dubbed the “boys in pink pants” because, in their 30s, they were young to be in government – and took the colossal risk of freezing prices after decades of state control. That was back in January 1992, at the start of Russia’s transformation to capitalism.

Naturally Mr Gaidar made mistakes and got his hands dirty. Now he is a hate figure for many Russians, and his party, Russia’s Democratic Choice-United Democrats (RDC-UD), will be lucky if it gains enough votes in parliamentary elections on Sunday week to pass the 5-per-cent threshold to enter the assembly.

During the painful reforms, Mr Yavlinsky sat on the sidelines, criticising and keeping an unsullied reputation. Now he is seen as one of the few politicians worth a vote by those electors who waited to prevent a Communist landslide or the rise of ugly nationalists. His Yabloko party appears consistently in second place behind the Communist front-runner in the opinion polls. If it does indeed do well, Mr Yavlinsky, 43, will use his success at parliamentary level to propel himself into the race for president next June.

The parliamentary-election shock of two years ago was at the social cost of the changes, and in December 1992 President Yeltsin was forced to drop his protégé and replace him with Viktor Chernomyrdin, the present Prime Minister. Mr Chernomyrdin, as leader of the “Our Home is Russia” movement, is now trying to persuade voters to persevere with reforms in order to reap the benefits.

But the two politicians, who are very close in their world outlook, differing only on economic technicalities, have failed again to pool their efforts. There was talk of them entering an alliance earlier this year,

but a personality clash evidently wrecked the plan. Of course, Mr Gaidar needed Mr Yavlinsky more than Mr Yavlinsky needed Mr Gaidar.

It was not always so. In 1992, Mr Gaidar was Prime Minister while Mr Yavlinsky was out in the provinces, advising on local privatisation schemes. Under Mr Gaidar prices rocketed, but a market did begin to develop, and the shops, which had been catastrophically empty in the winter of 1991-92, filled up with goods.

The Soviet-era Russian parliament howled in protest at the social cost of the changes, and in December 1992 President Yeltsin was forced to drop his protégé and replace him with Viktor Chernomyrdin, the present Prime Minister. Mr Chernomyrdin, as leader of the “Our Home is Russia” movement, is now trying to persuade voters to persevere with reforms in order to reap the benefits.

Sergei Kovalyov, and if his party, with the uninspiring slogan “Be rational, say no to Gaidar”, wins any votes, it is likely to be because of his strong stance over Chechnya.

Mr Yavlinsky, more charismatic than the pudgy-faced Mr Gaidar, also opposes the war in Chechnya, but his main argument

with the government is over economic policy. Mr Chernomyrdin has paid special attention to the energy sector, but Mr Yavlinsky believes the emphasis should be on small businesses, so that Russia develops a healthy middle class.

While other parties are spending lavishly on television

advertising campaigns, Yabloko found some free publicity in the autumn when election bureaucrats disqualified it on a technicality. The Supreme Court re-instated Yabloko, but not before Mr Yavlinsky had achieved martyr status.

The intelligentsia is the “constituency” being wooed by

Yabloko, which means apple in Russian and also combines letters from the surnames of the founding members, Mr Yavlinsky, Yuri Boldyrev, a corruption fighter, and Vladimir Lukin, a former ambassador to the US.

Yabloko does indeed seem to attract professionals, such as teachers, doctors, scientists and artists, who have suffered since the loss of state subsidies who resist nostalgic formalism or the crude sorts of the nationalists.

They have been hurt by reform, but have not entirely lost hope in its efficacy, yet Mr Yavlinsky’s untried and will turn out to be less than.

Vote Apple to keep Communists at bay

MOSCOW – In the new capitalist Russia, where the ability to make fast money counts more than professional qualifications, Irina Glushenkova, a concert pianist, has found herself impoverished, writes Helen Womack.

Yet Ms Glushenkova is not nostalgic for Communism, which would have guaranteed her a living. On the contrary, she is considering how best to use her voice to make sure the Communists, favourites in the coming parliamentary elections, do not return to power.

Ms Glushenkova is a graduate of the once-prestigious Moscow Conservatory. The state gave her a free education at the highest level and, had the Soviet system of subsidising the arts continued, she could have expected a career as a performer. Instead, she went out into a world that does not value her skills. The bankrupt state can no longer support her, while most Russian businessmen have yet to mature to the point where they sponsor culture.

The 32-year-old pianist survives by teaching easy tunes to infants in a private school patronised by rich Russians. For this, she earns the equivalent of £96 a month, which does not go far now that many go to Western prices.

Ms Glushenkova, like her mother and grandmother in a cramped flat in a working-class suburb of Moscow. The bitter about this, because the family had a spacious tenement house which the Communists confiscated.

This is one reason why Ms Glushenkova will vote Communist. Another is, despite having gained little in material terms from reform, she has benefited from greater freedom in Russia. “I don’t want to go back to totalitarianism,” she says, so she votes strategically in an attempt to block the Communists as well as Russian nationalists.

Ms Glushenkova is fused by the plethora of people offering themselves, by moving towards a decisive Free marketeers who have already been in government rejected, because of the p they have caused. But this another reformer who has tried, and Ms Glushenkova will probably give a chance to Grigory Yavlinsky and his Yabloko (Apple) grouping.

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international

Aristide keeps US guessing over elections

HILDAVISON
Port-au-Prince

hen the Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, announced the other day that he is getting married, he left little to the imagination. And no one was quite sure whether he is still officially Catholic priest and therefore ineligible to be president.

The media quickly ascertained that his fiancée was Mildred Trouillot, a 33-year-old Haitian-American lawyer who had worked for him during three years of exile in the US. For his clerical status, he is known to have asked the Vatican to release him from his vows after the Salesian order excommunicated him for political activism. But, as far as is known, has not received an answer.

The ambiguity of his engagement announcement was typical of the 42-year-old former clerical priest who swept to power in 1990, was forced into exile by a military coup a year later and was reinstated last October courtesy of a peaceful US military intervention.

Other ambiguities in his recent public comments have raised questions as to whether presidential elections will take place on Sunday week as scheduled, and whether he will hand over power as promised on 7 February next year. Under the constitution, he cannot run for consecutive term and is not a candidate on 17 December. But he has kept both Haiti and the Clinton administration guessing.

He has not publicly endorsed his Lavalas (Avalanche) party's candidate, René Preval, and signs of an election campaign are minimal in Port-au-Prince. Many of Mr Aristide's supporters are clamouring for him to complete the three years of his term he missed while exiled because of the 1991 coup. "We want Aristide for ever," say anti-apartheid activists in Port-au-Prince. For President Bill Clinton, however, what has been billed as his

"greatest foreign policy success" - the 1994 intervention which overthrew the Haitian military rulers - hinges on Mr Aristide handing over power. That was what "Operation Uphold Democracy" was all about.

With US forces headed for Bosnia and an election year looming, Mr Clinton is particularly keen on rounding off his

bargaining chip to free US aid.

Millions of dollars of American and other international aid has been delayed because Mr Aristide has been slow to implement a privatisation programme he promised in return for the US intervention. The documents to which reference were taken by US troops from Haitian military headquarters and the offices of the Praph, the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, a paramilitary group which worked closely with the coup leaders and terrorised the population before the US intervention.

Mr Aristide believes the documents may reveal CIA activities against him before and during his term, and perhaps even in the 1991 coup.

The former Praph leader Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, in jail in the US awaiting deportation to Haiti, said this week that he had been paid \$700 (£450) a month by the CIA - a fortune in Haiti - for several years and that the agency had been grooming him "maybe to be a successor" to Mr Aristide. The CIA, he alleged, "had its own agenda" in Haiti, trying to undermine Mr Aristide even as Mr Clinton's White House was supporting him and trying to restore him to power.

Panchen Lama: Chinese tamper with mystic tradition to weaken exiled leader



Children's drama: Peking is enthroning its own Panchen Lama (left), while holding exiled Tibetan leadership's choice (right) under arrest

Tibet in turmoil over ruin of ancient rituals

TIM MCGIRK
New Delhi

Tibet is in turmoil over the fate of two six-year-old boys. One of them, Gyalsey Norbu, is to be enthroned today by Chinese authorities as the reincarnation of the spiritual leader, the Panchen Lama.

For that, the boy can expect a lifetime of ill-will focused on him by millions of Tibetans who see him as a Chinese stooge, chosen not because he radiates enlightenment but because his father, a security officer in Ngari prefecture, was an obedient Communist.

The other boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima - whom Tibet's exiled god-king, the Dalai Lama, has declared to be the true reincarnation - may be doomed by the Chinese to an early death or imprisonment, according to Tibetan exiles. "Even the boy's existence is a danger for the Chinese," said one exile in India.

By tampering with the selection of the Panchen Lama, the

Chinese are attempting to smash an occult ritual that has persisted in Tibet for hundreds of years. Tibetan Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and thus certain enlightened lamas can, after death, choose to be reborn and continue their teachings.

Since the 16th century, the Dalai Lamas have assisted with their supernatural powers in finding the reincarnated

Panchen Lama, and vice versa. Tibetans consider the Dalai Lama to be an emanation of Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of Compassion, while the Panchen Lama is revered only slightly less. The Dalai Lama has traditionally been based in Lhasa and the Panchen Lama in Shigatse, Tibet's second city, and their relationship has sometimes been muddled by politics and personal rivalries. After 1959, when the Dalai Lama fled to Dharamsala in India following a failed uprising while the Panchen Lama remained in Tibet, they could scarcely communicate at all.

But never, throughout the centuries, have the Chinese emperors been called in to meddle with the arcane search for a Panchen Lama. The last Panchen Lama, the ninth in his line, was a chubby and jolly-looking 50-year-old who died in 1989 after having spent 10 years under house arrest for criticising Chinese rule in Tibet.

Tibetans in Dharamsala claim that the Dalai Lama,

who is in his 60s, had wanted the true Panchen Lama to begin his religious instruction as swiftly as possible, so that when he dies the Panchen Lama can lead the Tibetan people until the next Dalai Lama is born.

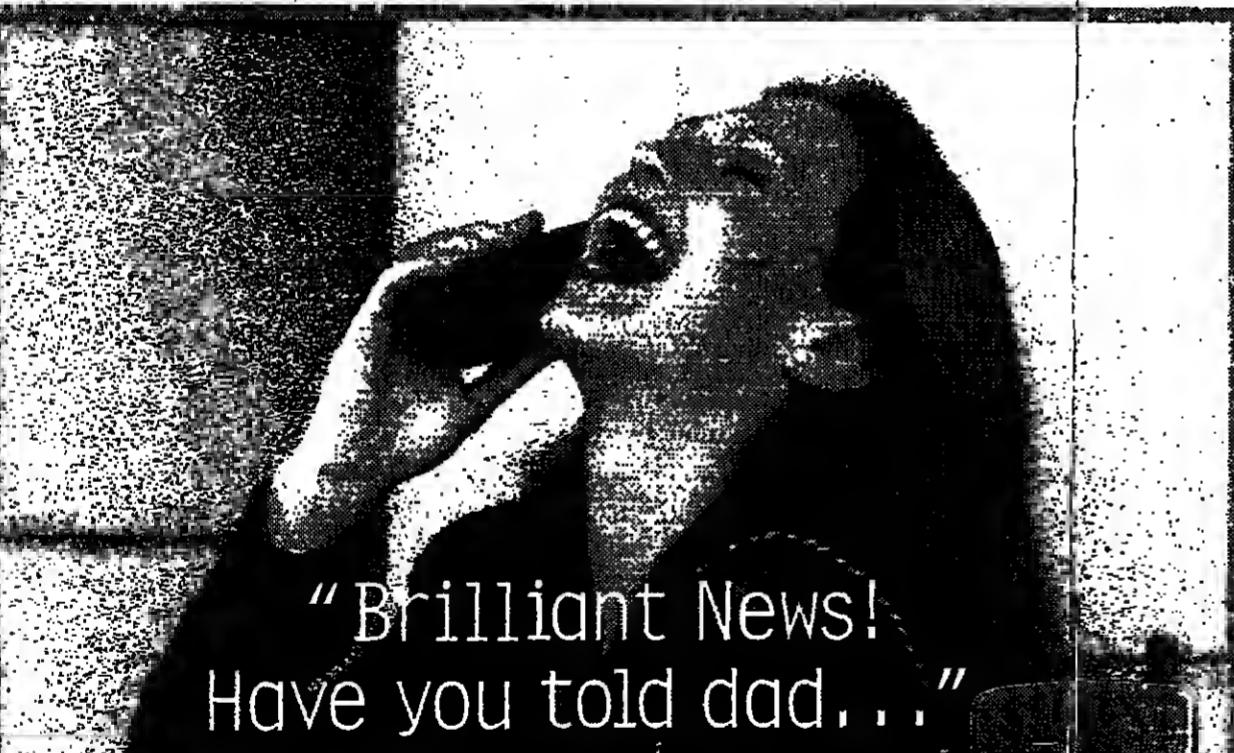
When the Dalai Lama announced he had located the rebirth of the Panchen Lama last spring after mystical divination and consulting oracles, the child

and his nomad parents were seized by the Chinese off the high Tibetan plateau and have not been seen since. The Dalai Lama recently said: "At this moment the safety of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his proper religious training is of particular concern to me. He has not been seen in public for some months and is reported to be detained somewhere in Peking."

By installing their choice on the Panchen Lama's throne in Tashilhumpo monastery in Shigatse, the Chinese are trying to strengthen their hold on Tibet. Having failed to destroy Buddhism, even though the Red Guards demolished thousands of monasteries during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese are now trying to use the Panchen Lama to undermine the tremendous influence the Dalai Lama has on religious and independence-minded Tibetans. This tactic, according to Tibetan experts, is likely to fail: few Tibetans are willing to let the Chinese dictate in matters of Buddhist faith and tradition.



Dalai Lama: Power struggle with Chinese



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argument

No significant risk from beef

As the debate about BSE continues, we print the second of two contributions from eminent scientists. Robert Will argues that the chance of disease crossing to humans is minimal

Professor Blakemore's article in yesterday's *Independent* provided a concise discussion of the evidence relating to the possibility that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) might cause a spongiform encephalopathy in the human population. Although most scientists would agree that there is a remote theoretical risk from BSE, no link between BSE and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) has yet been demonstrated and the emphasis in

Professor Blakemore's conclusions on a risk in relation to beef is, in my view, misleading and almost certainly wrong.

Transmission by the oral route in these diseases is extremely inefficient, requiring exposure to large doses of infectivity. In kuru, the brain disease found among New Guinea people and referred to by Professor Blakemore, women and children were predominantly affected because they were exposed to tissues,

including brain, containing high levels of infectivity, in the course of ritual cannibalism.

Furthermore, the transmission of kuru may have been due to infection through abrasions in the skin rather than through oral consumption of human tissues. There is no good evidence of detectable infectivity in muscle in any prion disease, including BSE; and the BSE agent, like scrapie, may well not be a risk to the human population at all.

The transmission of BSE to a number of species, including domestic cats and captive zoo animals, was almost certainly due to the dietary exposure of these species to foodstuffs containing brain and spinal cord from cattle, tissues that have high levels of infectivity. Professor Blakemore is wrong to suggest that beef products were the likely cause of cross-species transmission of BSE, as detectable infectivity has been found only in brain and spinal cord

in natural cases of BSE. The crucial issue is the level of exposure to infection and this may be the reason why BSE has transmitted to other species rather than implying a more potent infectious agent. It is of note that there are many zoo species which must have been exposed to BSE through foodstuffs but have not developed a spongiform encephalopathy.

From the perspective of human health, it is clearly essential that people are not exposed to levels of infection that might cause disease, if the BSE agent were a risk to man.

The specified bovine offals (SBO) ban introduced in 1989 has ensured that brain and spinal cord, together with other tissues that might theoretically contain significant infectivity, are excluded from the human food chain. It is clearly essential that the SBO ban is applied rigorously and that any possibility of failure of the SBO ban is promptly and appropriately dealt with.

The possibility of vertical transmission of prion disease is "frightening", as Professor Blakemore suggests, not least to those individuals at greater

Even if the BSE agent were a risk to man, oral transmission would require very high levels of infectivity.

risk of CJD; for example, recipients of human pituitary-derived hormones. However, there is no good evidence of maternal transmission of CJD, or kuru, nor indeed of any other prion disease. The long-held view that scrapie was transmitted materially has recently been vigorously challenged and epidemiological evidence suggests that if vertical transmission of BSE occurs at all, this must be at a very low rate.

It is likely that the occurrence of BSE in animals "born after the ban" is related to continued exposure to contaminated cattle feed rather than to maternal transmission.

As Professor Blakemore points out, the incubation period in CJD is not known. However, in kuru, the minimum incubation period was four years and the maximum more than 30 years; in the tragic cases of accidental transmission of CJD through contaminated pituitary hormones, the mean incubation period is approximately 13 years.

In all prion diseases, the route of exposure influences the incubation period; as pituitary hormones were given by injection, it is reasonable to presume that less efficient oral exposure would result in a significantly longer incubation period. One implication is that if a link between BSE and CJD were established, this would reflect exposures that took place perhaps 10-15 years ago, ie, before the SBO ban and perhaps before BSE was even identified.

The recent upsurge in interest in CJD has been prompted by a number of factors: an increase in the total number of cases of CJD in the UK, the occurrence of CJD in four

farmers with potential occupational exposure to BSE, and identification of two cases of CJD in teenagers. The incidence of CJD remains similar to other countries in Europe as also elsewhere, indicating that there is no relative increase in the incidence of CJD in the UK that can be attributed to BSE. The likely reason for the increase in numbers of cases is that there has been an improvement in identification of cases of CJD both in the UK and elsewhere.

The occurrence of CJD in four farmers is less easy to explain and is understandable causing concern. However, the means by which BSE could be transmitted through farming has been established and the incidence of CJD in farmers in Europe is similar to the UK. Again, there appears to be no increased relative risk in the UK to farmers that can be related to BSE.

The occurrence of CJD in teenagers is tragic, but cases of CJD in teenagers have been described previously in other countries where there cannot be a link with BSE. There is also the possibility that cases of CJD in younger patients may previously have been missed because of misdiagnosis. In Poland, three young patients with CJD were thought to be suffering from the rare measles-related disease SSPE, which shares many of the clinical features of CJD.

In my opinion, there is a risk of over-interpreting small numbers of cases, and statistical analysis may be unreliable. In the United States in the Eighties, two primary school teachers developed CJD within a few months, having taught in the same school, and "clusters" of cases of CJD have been described in a number of countries over the past 20 years.

There are limitations to the epidemiological study of a rare disease as it may be impossible to assess the significance of minor changes, although continued surveillance of CJD will allow any major change to be identified, particularly if comparisons with other countries without BSE continue.

It is also important to consider whether any other mechanism may allow the source of infection in individual cases of CJD to be identified. Transmission studies in mice may provide further evidence on agent source in specific cases: such studies are already under way.

No link between BSE and CJD has been established, but the possibility of such a link cannot be excluded for many years because of the long incubation period in these diseases. In my view, the possibility of such a link remains theoretical, but even if the BSE agent were a risk to man, oral transmission would require exposure to high levels of infectivity, as in kuru.

This is why the SBO ban is so important and why I believe the risk from eating beef is negligible. I agree with much of Professor Blakemore's article, but I do not believe it is reasonable to conclude that there is significant risk from eating beef; I have therefore not altered my consumption of beef or beef products, and neither have any of my colleagues at the CJD Surveillance Unit.

The writer is head of the CJD Surveillance Unit at Edinburgh's Western General Hospital



Photograph: Brian Ha

It's in the Bag!

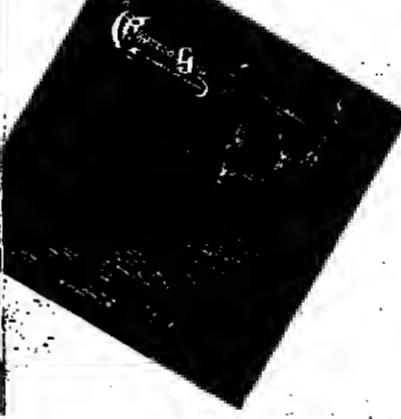
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James

gazette / obituaries

James Reston

James B. Reston was his by-line, but to his family, his colleagues and the world at large he was known as Scotty. He was the outstanding American journalist of the post-war period. For nearly half a century as a reporter and columnist for the *New York Times* he achieved more major scoops, interviewed more world leaders and won more respect from his fellow journalists than anyone else in the news business. Because of his personal integrity he was trusted by those who provided the news as well as by those who read it.

As his nickname implied, Reston was born in Scotland. His father, a small, kindly man with strong Calvinist beliefs, left Clydesbank for Dayton, Ohio, in 1911, when his son was only two. But domestic and financial problems overwhelmed the family and they returned to Scotland. In 1920, a lean time on Clydeside, Reston senior went to Ohio again, eventually found work, and sent for his family to join him.

Within a few days of his second arrival in America young Reston, then aged 10, landed his first paying job as a caddie at the local golf club. A regular player there was the Governor of Ohio, James Cox, who had just been defeated by Warren Harding in his bid for the American presidency. Governor Cox encouraged young Reston to learn the game himself. He gave him a couple of clubs and paid for some professional lessons. The boy spent all his free time on the course and won several junior championships.

His skill at golf helped him finance his way through the University of Illinois School of Journalism, where he got a post in the university sports publicity office and became the captain of the university golf team. It was at the School of Journalism that he met Sally, the intelligent, dark-haired, vivacious daughter of Judge William Fulton. Until then Scotty Reston had been a superb athlete but an indifferent student. He raised himself to her standards and began to do well academically. His autobiography *Deadline*, published in 1991, is the story of the two loves of his life; his adopted country, and Sally Fulton, whom he married on Christmas Eve 1935.

Governor Cox died Reston a further good turn. He helped him procure a job as a sports writer on one of the Cox newspapers in Ohio. This in turn led to his becoming the publicity di-

rector of a baseball team, the Cincinnati Reds, and later a sports reporter for the Associated Press in New York. In 1937 the news agency transferred him to London, essentially to cover Wimbledon, the Grand National, championship prize fights and international golf matches, rather than the looming threat of war. He and Sally enjoyed getting to know England. The doctor who delivered their eldest son Dick was a courteous young man called John Peel, later the famous Sir John Peel who attended the Queen, when each of her four children were born.

On 1 September 1939, the day that Hitler attacked Poland, Reston transferred to the London bureau of the *New York Times*. He reported London at war in its early stages, but towards the end of the Blitz he developed indolent fever and was shipped back to America. He was attached to the Washington bureau of the *New York Times*. It was his first experience of the city he was later to dominate so decisively.

While working as a reporter Reston wrote a book, *Prelude to Victory*, which challenged the widespread mood of isolationism common in the American Congress in 1941. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor the Office of War Information, the US propaganda agency, asked the *New York Times* to release Reston to work in London. While he was there the new publisher of the *Times*, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, called on the American ambassador, John Winant. Winant summoned Reston to help answer a question, mentioning to Sulzberger that Reston was on temporary leave from the *New York Times*, and jokingly adding that without his support the entire Allied war effort would collapse. The publisher thereupon invited Reston to come for a private talk and shortly made him his personal assistant. As Reston said, London was his lucky town.

After a visit with Sulzberger to Moscow, and a formative spell at the head office in New York, Reston reverted to Washington. His bear was the foreign embassies. President Roosevelt, after his fourth-term victory in 1944 and with the war reaching its climax, called an international conference at Dumbarton Oaks, a fine mansion in the Georgetown area of Washington, to discuss the terms of peace and the organisation of the post-war world.

Reston was assigned to cov-

er Dumbarton Oaks. He had the good fortune to meet there a Chinese friend, Chen Yi, who had been apprenticed to the *New York Times* before the war. Chen Yi was attending as a junior member of the Chinese (Nationalists) delegation. Reston discovered that Chen Yi had the complete texts of the proposals being discussed by the US, British, Soviet and Chinese delegations. He congratulated his old friend on his successful career and persuaded him that it would be a pity not to share these wonderful proposals with the people who had suffered so much during the war. Reston added that the *New York Times*, as the only American paper of record, would devote the space necessary for their complete and careful publication.

Without delay Chen Yi opened his briefcase and handed Reston the whole collection of documents in English. He hurried back with them to Arthur Krock, the *Times* bureau chief, and they arranged that the paper should publish the US text one day, the Soviet the next, and so on. There was a furious rumour at Dumbarton Oaks. Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet delegate, accepted the *New York Times* of trying to divide the Allies. The US Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, charged Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, with committing an "outrageous breach of security", but the conference survived and Reston was awarded his first Pulitzer Prize.

After steadily enhancing his reputation Reston succeeded Krock as the Washington bureau chief in 1953. He then started writing a column of opinion and interpretation which was nationally syndicated in America and frequently reprinted abroad. It was written with style and insight, and frequently expressed the conscience of the United States, as when he said of Richard Nixon's role in the Watergate scandal, "There is scarcely a noble principle in the Constitution that he hasn't defended in theory or defied in practice."

Sometimes there was humour.

In the cloakroom of his house in Washington there used to hang the original of a *New Yorker* cartoon with one of those massive Helen Hokinson matrons sighing, "Oh dear, Mr Reston's being funny again!"

Reston arranged with his employers to forgo the services of a secretary in return for being allowed to appoint each year a bright young college graduate to answer the mail, find the missing facts and review his copy. This system, akin to the clerks to Justices of the Supreme Court, was recommended by one of them, his friend Felix Frankfurter. It enabled Reston to build a remarkably talented Washington bureau for the *New York Times*, and to start a number of excellent American journalists on their newspaper careers.

Reston's second Pulitzer Prize came for his reporting of the 1956 presidential election, in which Dwight Eisenhower beat Adlai Stevenson for the second time. Stevenson was Reston's favourite political loser. I remember lying on the floor next to Reston outside the Illinois Caucus room at the beginning of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1952. We were listening through the gap under the door as Stevenson earnestly pleaded with the Illinois delegates not to nominate him. As governor of the host state he had just made a rousing speech of welcome, which had put heart into the dispirited Democrats, but he wanted to remain Governor of Illinois. Nobody needed to save the United States from Eisen-

hower. Stevenson argued, and couldn't if they tried, after 20 years of Democratic rule.

In 1964 Scotty Reston re-

turned to New York to become the associate editor of the paper, and from 1968 the executive editor with principal responsibility for directing the news of the daily and Sunday papers. However after a few years he decided he was happier writing in Washington than editing in New York. He and his wife made frequent trips abroad, for his reputation guaranteed him ready access and exclusive interviews with any of the world's leaders.

After 48 years with the *New York Times* Reston wrote his last regular column in August 1967. In it he said:

I would feel better if marriage were more popular but I doubt if many people are ever so well fed, well read, or bright-minded and curious and critical as the rising generation is today. My hope for them after more than 52 years of married life is that they'll finally know what old is like.

Reston had had a singularly rewarding family life. Sally was a delightful hostess and a most supportive wife. She and Scotty bought the *Vineyard Gazette*, a famous paper on Martha's

Vineyard, which their eldest son, Dick, as editor has made into the best weekly in New England. Their second, Jim, has written highly successful political biographies, and might have been the first journalist to travel in a space mission, but for the *Challenger* disaster in 1986 which put a stop to civilian passengers. The youngest, Tom, now a lawyer, was a State Department spokesman during the Carter administration.

Leonard Miall

James Barrett Reston, newspaperman and author; born Clydebank 3 November 1909; reporter, *Warren Daily News* 1932-33; publicity director, Cincinnati Baseball Club 1934; reporter, Associated Press, New York 1934-37; London 1937-39; reporter, New York Times London bureau 1939-41; Washington bureau 1941; suff., American Embassy, London 1942; personal assistant to the publisher, *New York Times* 1943-44; Washington bureau 1944-53; chief Washington correspondent 1953-64; associate editor 1964-68; executive editor 1968-87; married 1935 Sally Fulton (three sons); died Washington DC 6 December 1995.

Ewart: lost his eye in 1942

peacock included *Shades of Green*, *Danger UXB* and two BBC serialisations of Charles Dickens' novels, *Our Mutual Friend* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Dickens was her favourite author). She made her final screen appearance in the 1979 Disney comedy chase film *The London Connection* in the small role of an elderly bystander.

In 1992, Harrison owned up

to reaching the grand old age of 100 and received her telegram from the Queen, after a lifetime of making herself out to be six years younger. She was one of Britain's oldest surviving actresses.

Anthony Hayward

Kathleen Harrison, actress; born Blackburn, Lancashire 23 February 1892; married 1916 John Henry Back (died 1960; one son, one daughter, and one son deceased); died 7 December 1995.

As her cinema appearances became less frequent, Harrison also turned to television, finding a large following as the star of *My Thursday*, a role created for her by Ted Willis in 1966. Again, the series was panned by the critics, but viewers loved it and immediately made *My Thursday* the most popular programme on television, even toppling the mighty *Coronation Street* from its No 1 slot in the ratings. In the previous year, also featuring Hugh Manning – later to play the Rev Donald Hinton in *Emmerdale Farm* – Harrison acted a character who inherits £10m and the controlling interest in a multinational company.

Five years later, she turned

down the title role in Jeremy Sandford's acclaimed BBC play *Edna the Inebriate Woman*, which won Patricia Hayes a Best Actress on TV award. Harrison's other television ap-

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of Britain's oldest surviving act-

resses.

Paul Magrath, Barrister

guardian, her Ladyship disagreed.

The guardian had no func-

tion outside the proceedings to

which he had been appointed.

A social worker's duties to

wards children in his area were

far wider and were by no means

confined to court proceedings.

In many cases the children

never came before a court.

Some documents created by

the social services department,

such as written statements

made for the purpose of care

proceedings, would be cov-

ered by rule 4.23; but many,

such as oral admissions record-

ed in writing in the social work

file, would not.

Her Ladyship would give a

more restrictive interpretation

to rule 4.23 and limit it to doc-

uments held by the court in the

court file. It was important

that the rule should not be too

loosely interpreted so as to cov-

er information at a stage when

it was not intended to be

covered and which would be

contrary to the wider consider-

ations of the child's best inter-

ests.

Sir Roger Parker concurred.

Lord Justice Auld gave a dis-

senting judgment.

Paul Magrath, Barrister

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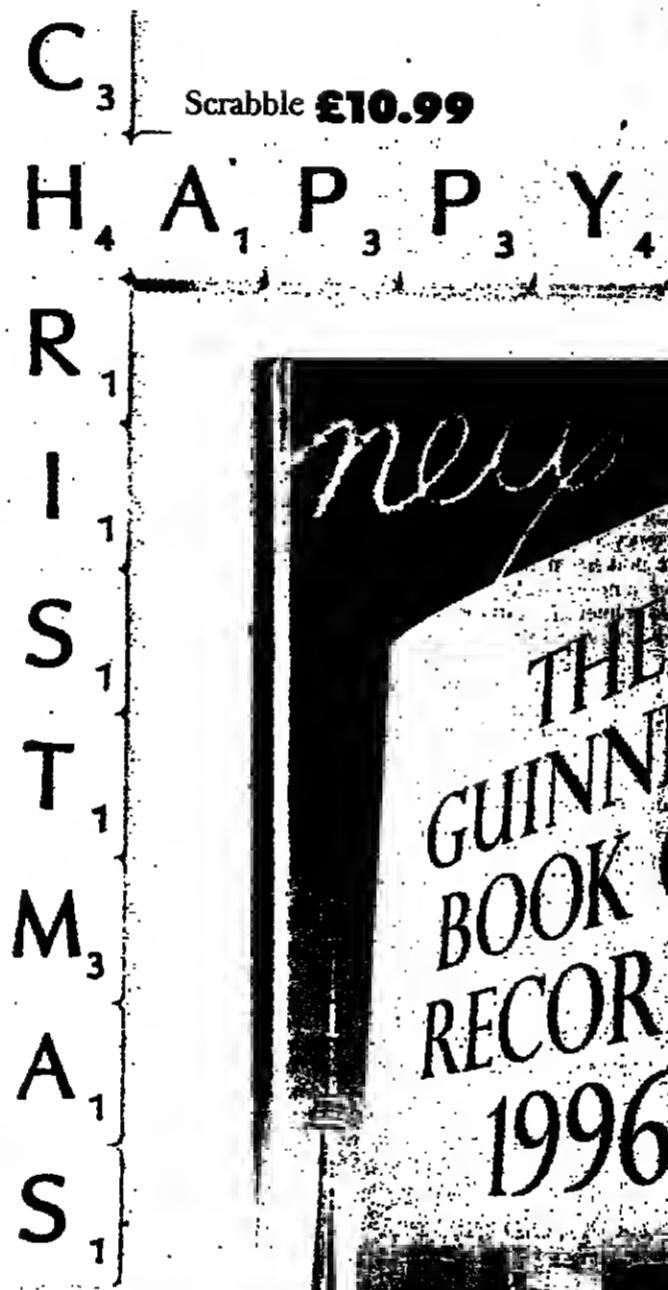
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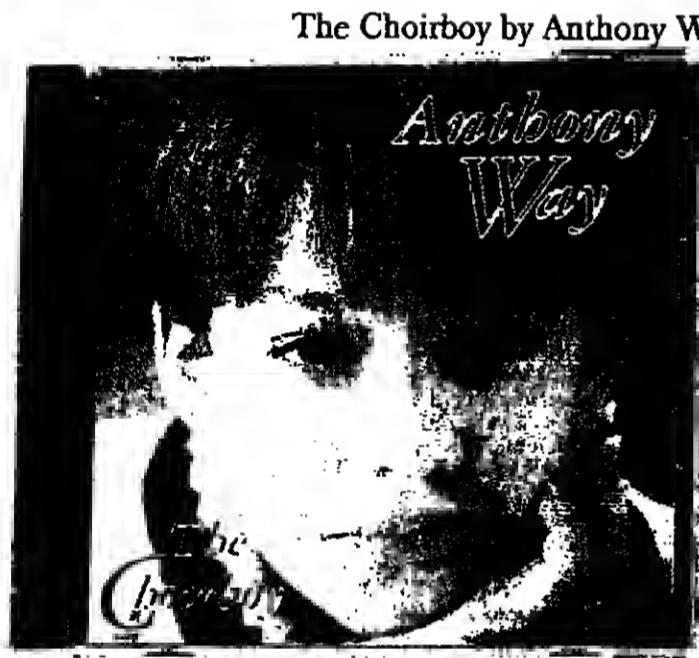
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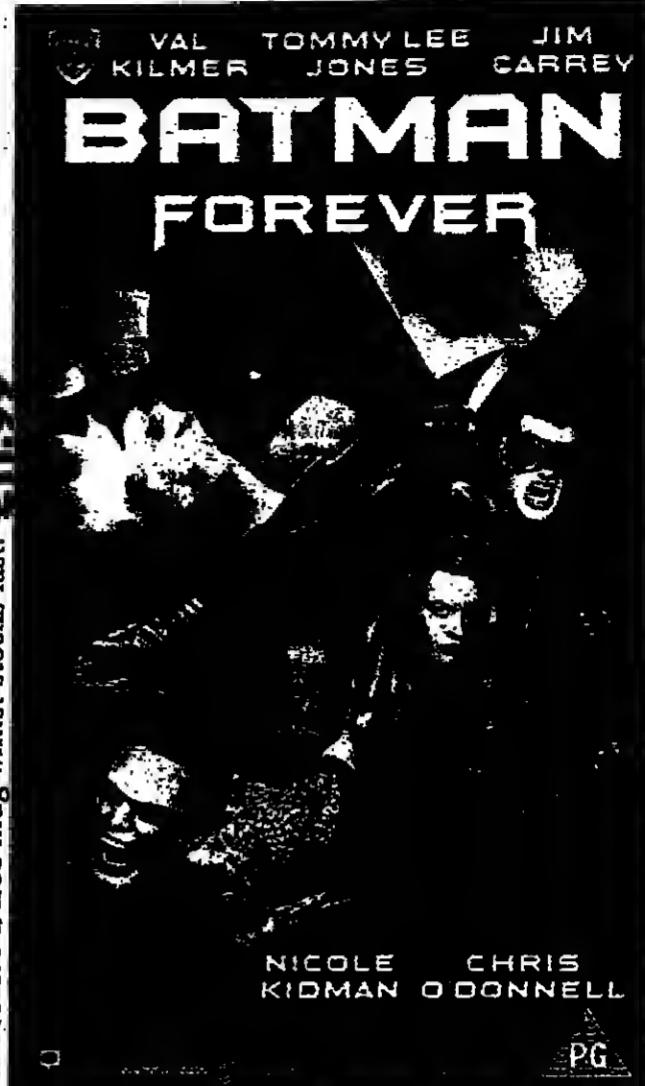


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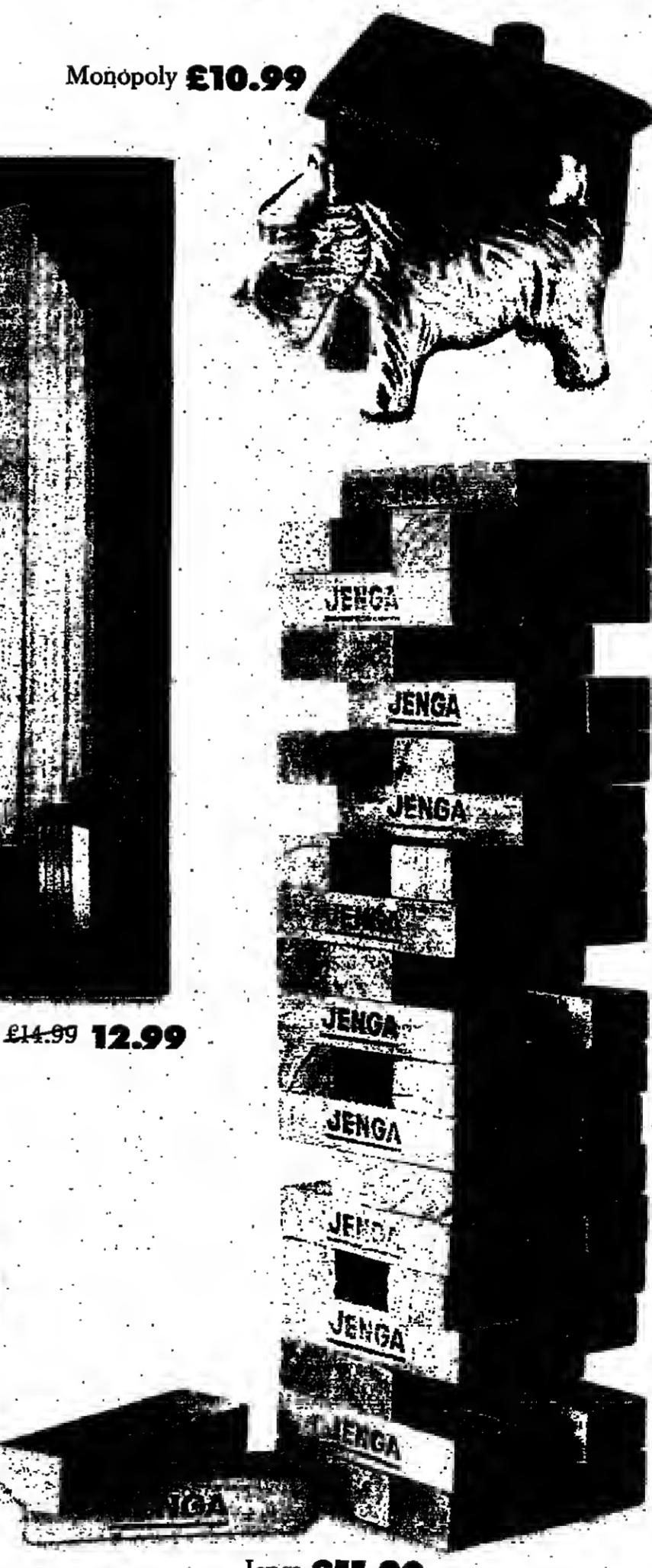
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is 1999

Tony Barber looks

Wilce

Which member states will be ready for EMU?	Austria	Belgium	Britain	Denmark	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden
Official government attitude towards EMU	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Has an opt-out clause	Has an opt-out clause	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed	Publicly committed
Who formally would meet the criteria for joining the EMU this year?	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Who will meet the criteria for joining the EMU in 1999?	Probable	Probable	Possible	Probable	Probable	Probable	Probable	Unlikely	Probable	Unlikely	Probable	Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible
What specific measures needs to be taken to qualify for EMU?	Reducing borrowing together with total debt	Nothing, borrowing and debt at an acceptable level	Reducing borrowing together with total debt	Reduce total debt	Reducing borrowing together with total debt	Nothing, borrowing and debt at an acceptable level	Reducing borrowing together with total debt								
Do you agree or disagree with EMU replacing the national currency?	60% agreed, 39% disagreed	54% agreed, 45% disagreed	54% agreed, 45% disagreed	54% agreed, 45% disagreed	26% agreed, 63% disagreed	68% agreed, 31% disagreed	36% agreed, 63% disagreed	60% agreed, 31% disagreed	60% agreed, 31% disagreed	79% agreed, 14% disagreed	64% agreed, 31% disagreed	57% agreed, 40% disagreed	49% agreed, 50% disagreed	69% agreed, 30% disagreed	33% agreed, 59% disagreed

Is 1999 disappearing into the 21st century?

Tony Barber looks at the ramifications if European monetary union is not in place by the deadline set at Maastricht

How satisfying it must feel this week to be a Tory Eurosceptic. France's social unrest is only the latest of several developments in the European Union that appear, in the eyes of the anti-European right, to support the argument that it would be deeply wrong to proceed with the planned launch of a single currency in January 1999.

Eurosceptics are confident not just that they have shifted the domestic political debate about Europe, to the point where British participation in monetary union is unthinkable, but that the debate on the Continent is also moving in their direction. They claim, to see more and more evidence that European policy-makers, produced by public opinion, are abandoning the ambition of launching the single currency in 1999 and may even ditch the project altogether.

Clearly, a growing number of politicians, bankers, industrialists, trade unions and media pundits across the Continent are having doubts about whether European monetary union (EMU) can start on

schedule. However, most would profoundly disagree with the notion that they have something in common with what, in their eyes, is the negative Euroscepticism of the English nationalist Tory right.

For example, Italy's Prime

Wednesday that the EU must carefully study the impact of a single currency on participating and non-participating states, he was not looking for a formula to strangle EMU before it is born.

Officially, 13 of the EU's 15 states are dedicated to monetary union. In a 14th, Denmark, political leaders would like to join but it is not that public opinion forced them in 1992 to obtain an opt-out clause from the Maastricht treaty deadline.

Unhappily for the Tory Eurosceptics, they are less often viewed on the Continent as trend-setters than as troglodytes.

Yet it has become increasingly clear this year that the launch of EMU in January 1999 is by no means a foregone conclusion. Uncertainty about the prospects for a single currency dominate the economic and market analyses published by leading European investment houses. No one in the world of international finance and business is yet taking monetary union for granted.

It is a different story in the European Commission, whose president, Jacques Santer, recently pored over the intellectual prowess of Neil Kinnock, the transport commissioner, for suggesting EMU might not happen on schedule in 1999. However, it is a reasonable guess that Mr Kinnock's only offence was to put in public what Mr Santer and others have reluctantly contemplated in private.

The chief obstacles to the single currency concern national economic policies in the EU, inter-governmental relations and public opinion. To start the project on time, most EU governments are trying to cut public expenditure and implement other austerity measures to meet the strict Maastricht criteria on low budget deficits, public debts and inflation.

No doubt many governments are running such large deficits, and are accumulating such forbiddingly high debts in their extensive social security systems, that they would be compelled to introduce belt-tightening programmes whether or not the deadline of January 1999 was approaching. As the

German government never tires of saying, healthy public finances are an objective always worth pursuing.

The fact remains, however, that it is fear of failing to meet the Maastricht targets which has galvanised governments into adopting deflationary policies at a time when millions of Europeans do not feel their countries have properly recovered from the most recent and very severe recession. Public opinion surveys repeatedly show that Europeans are preoccupied with job insecurity and what seems to be a generally precarious economic future. But their governments are pursuing policies that merely intensify these concerns.

The result in France, and to some extent in Belgium, has been the eruption of sudden and widespread social protest. In Austria, the coalition government of social democrats and conservatives was forced to resign last October when it tried to introduce budget cuts. Mr Dini's government of non-party technocrats is finding it no easier to reform the public finances.

There are grave doubts, therefore, about the price that the EU may be forcing itself to pay, in terms of political stability and social harmony, if it goes ahead with monetary union in 1999. A related point is that, since a majority of EU governments will probably fail to qualify for the single currency, EMU could prove a factor dividing the member-states among themselves.

An EU in which Germany and France formed a monetary union, but Britain, Italy and Spain stayed outside, could lead to bitter accusations that one group was putting the other at a disadvantage because of its economic policies. EMU insiders would be watching like hawks for signs that outsiders were letting their currencies slip in search of a competitive edge, while outsiders might complain that they were being forced to pay an interest-rate premium for being kept out of monetary union.

If the EU decides, next year or in 1997, that the 1999 deadline is unrealistic, financial markets will almost certainly take

eastern Europe. Europe would be in danger of losing its historic chance, created by the 1989 revolutions, to unite itself in peace and freedom.

According to many continental advocates of EMU, this could prove fatal to Europe.

Three are grave doubts about the

price the EU may be forcing itself to pay, in term of political stability

Postponement of monetary union, they say, would irreversibly damage the EU's single market, launched in 1993, and set back the cause of closer political integration.

It would also delay the admission of former Communist countries in central and

eastern Europe. Europe would be in danger of losing its historic chance, created by the 1989 revolutions, to unite itself in peace and freedom.

But perhaps events need not take such an apocalyptic course. Failure to achieve monetary union in 1999 would not be eternal disaster. EU countries would still have the same incentives as now to pursue exchange-rate convergence and financial discipline at home.

The EU need not dismantle the European Monetary Institute, forerunner of the future European central bank, or tear up any of the detailed plans now being prepared for introducing a single currency. It would simply acknowledge that the Maastricht schedule was too tight for today's circumstances and it is better for EMU to start later.

For sure, postponing the single currency carries risks. But monetary union is a big idea, the biggest in EU history, and Tory Eurosceptics should understand that it is not going to disappear in a hurry.

Wilkes's

Rupert Allason, aka the spy writer Nigel West, is likely to be a lone voice raised during the forthcoming Second Reading of the MI5 Bill. The Home Secretary is trying to give MI5 a wider role in combating crime, shoulder to shoulder with the police. Wilkes's old Cambridge friends in MI6—the classic James Bond organisation—are aghast at the way MI5 is expanding its empire, even to the point of openly advertising for recruits, while MI6 has been forced to cut its agents overseas.

So 007 is no longer able to afford the cost of living in Russia, and lavish beach apartments in the Caribbean are no longer allowed on MI6 expenses. But that is not Rupe's main objection. Nor is it even that he will have less material for his books; after all, the potential "turf wars" between MI5 and the police will provide pure gold for novels.

No, the spy writer is privately warning chums around the fire-room that turning MI5 into an undercover branch of the police is wholly unsatisfactory because MI5 officers—who need to protect their anonymity—will not be able to give evidence in open court. Allason reckons MI5 is not really up to taking evidence and statements and all the fiddly paperwork that policemen on the beat have to deal with on a routine basis. Why should the MP bother about this? In his spare time, he has also acted as a special constable, m'ud. I rest my case.

The Home Secretary is robustly supporting the Government's line on the safety of beef, in spite of the scare stories. Wilkes spied Michael Howard tucking into a hearty serving of calf's liver at the Soho House in Greek Street. The traditional preference in the Commons for beef may explain the past behaviour of some of Wilkes's backbench colleagues. Nevertheless, Wilkes would like to see more ministers following Howard's example.

Stephen Dorrell, the wimpish Health Secretary, should set the standard by ordering beef sandwiches for the whole Cabinet at next Thursday's meeting. With a liberal helping of beef dripping.

At least the Department of Health's employees are doing their bit to combat BSE scaremongering. The departmental canteen menu has been boasting minced beef and onion pie

Minister] and EDCP [the Cabinet committee that he chairs on the Government's self-promotion] to ensure interdepartmental co-operation and presentational cohesion, and to identify a lead Department responsible for ensuring that duty ministers are available to take media bids on the day.

"If ministers are content to proceed on this basis it is their wish that officials roll the pitch with key players before close of play on D-Day minus one to ensure a level playing field."

The whole thing is a spoof sent out as a Christmas card by the Department of Health's press office. It was written by Romulo Christopher, the redoubtable chief press officer who was once under the wing of Bernard Ingham at Number 10, to poke fun at the PR constancies invading Whitehall at the invitation of the First Secretary. Wilkes trusts that Hezza will see the funny side.

Less than seasonal cheer has broken out around Westminster. After the incident at the Reform Club when the Prime Minister's biographer Bruce "the brute"

Anderson was cut over the eye by a glass of wine hurled by a journalist's wife, there were unseemly scenes in Annie's Bar in the Commons, where a team of MPs behaved disgracefully after they were beaten by lobby journalists in the annual News Quiz. The MPs accused the journalists of cheating and refused to buy them a round of drinks. Annie's Bar rules oblige Wilkes to withhold the names of the MPs, but suffice to say that the quizmaster, Sir Harold Walker, a former Deputy Speaker of the Commons, made his excuses and left before the end of the game.

Labour MPs are all talking about one scene from *The Wilder Years*, the excellent BBC documentary accounting for Labour's long years in opposition (which can be summed up as: Thatcher, Foot, Owen and General Galtieri).

The scene is not Denis Healey squeezing into his mini, or Tony Benn trouncing the leadership in a



Frank preferred pop to politics

conference vote, it is the footage of a young, perky Patricia Hewitt at the 1980 conference berating the Callaghan government for betraying the working classes (rallying cry: "We have a right to be angry..."). The firebrand is now a respectable management consultant at Arthur Andersen.

Not all the Shadow Cabinet were watching on Sunday evening. Frank Dobson confessed to Wilkes that he was glued to *The Beatles Anthology* on the other side.

Wilkes's left-wing pin-up, Dawn Primarolo, who took over from Tony Benn as MP for Bristol South, has been backsliding from the Bennite cause. As a frontbencher in Gordon Brown's Treasury team and a member of the left-wing Campaign Group, Red Dawn has walked a careful tightrope and did not take part in the vote by some Campaign Group members against the 1p tax cut at the end of the Budget debate. Now Wilkes hears she has allowed her membership of the Campaign Group to lapse.

More evidence, sadly, that Hezza's touch is slipping. The First Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister got the thumbs down at a meeting of businessmen organised by Pro-Share, which promotes wider share ownership. His Labour-bashing speech prompted an immediate invitation to Alastair Darling, Labour's spokesman, to come and be their guest speaker next year.

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What if EMU can't fly?

This week has been a bad week for European monetary union (EMU). Events in France have placed a large question mark over the ability of its government to achieve the Maastricht criteria by 1999. The Major-Dini talks suggested that 1999 was premature. Already there is much soul-searching in Germany. And two weeks ago Commissioner Neil Kinnock argued that 1999 was unlikely and unwise. The Kohl-Chirac meeting yesterday may have reiterated their determination to see the project through by the appointed date, but there is now more reason than ever before to doubt whether such a monetary union will happen before the end of the century.

What would this mean? The European Commission believes it would be a disaster, and many on the Continent share that view. They argue that a failure to move ahead with monetary union in 1999 would deal a body-blow to the whole European project. Their view of the process of European integration is akin to riding a bicycle: once you stop pedalling you automatically fall off. There is nothing for it but to press on.

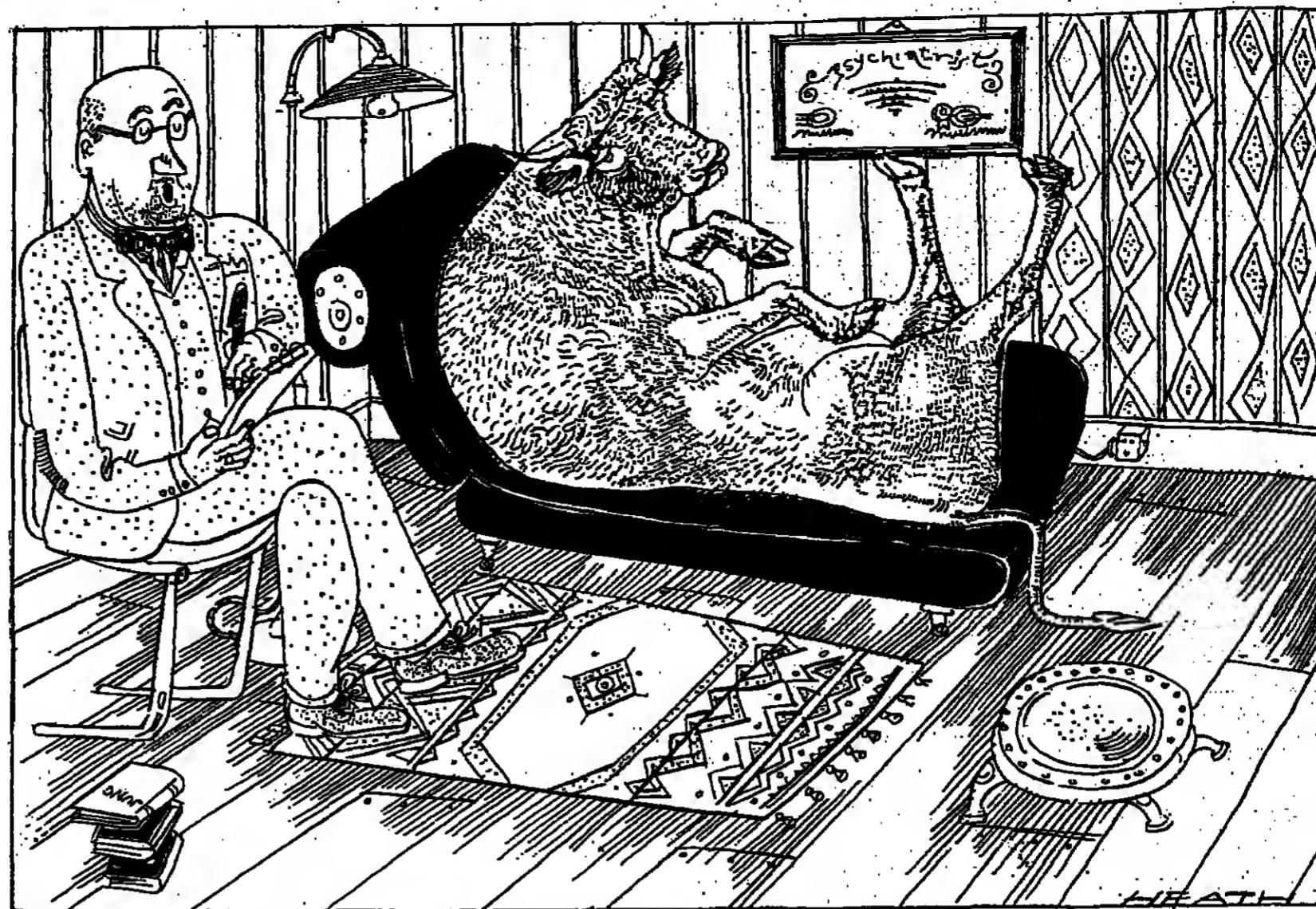
Is this view correct? If it is not, then a number of our partners are in danger of risking internal stability and medium-term prosperity for the sake of a chimera. To proceed towards a single currency according to a foolhardy or ultimately unattainable deadline could be an act of irresponsibility. Those countries unable easily to meet the terms of entry might take (as some believe is now happening in France) draconian action too quickly. The result might well be a wave of res-

entment towards both national and European political classes which would endanger the very European project that monetary union is designed to bolster and reinforce.

The truth, as felt by many pro-Europeans on this side of the Channel, is that the bicycle view is wrong. It underestimates the strength and durability of a union that is now nearly 40 years old. It also rests on the proposition that the next stage of integration can only consist of monetary union. This is surely untrue. The widening of the EU to include some of the nations of eastern Europe is, in itself, an act of great historical importance. This enlargement will require an extension of qualified majority voting, an enhanced role for the European Parliament and (long overdue) reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Also on the European agenda for 1996 is the pressure for more co-ordinated foreign and (apologies to Michael Portillo) defence policies. We cannot rely on America always to be there to bail us out, as in Bosnia.

Events in Paris this week remind us how impatient some of our partners are for further union. Perhaps they cannot be persuaded that a slippage in the timetable for EMU would be no great tragedy. But we would find it easier to sell this approach to them if our diplomacy were more concerned with exploring the other possibilities in Europe, and less obsessed with fighting off encroachments from Johnny Foreigner. We can, if necessary, live without EMU for a few more years, because there are lots of other important things to do.



No, you're not mad, but you are a little depressed*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Some facts about the tribunal that condemned Saro-Wiwa

From Mr Michael Birnbaum, QC

Sir: The *Independent* of 6 December published a lengthy advertisement by the Nigerian High Commission justifying the conviction by a Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others. It made the remarkable claim that the tribunal was lawful and "recognised under the Nigerian Judicial system".

Under the Nigerian constitution, a defendant is entitled to a fair hearing before an independent and impartial court or tribunal. In a case of murder, the trial must take place in a State High Court. Before or during the trial, the accused can seek judicial review of the decisions of the trial judge. After conviction, he can appeal. In a capital case, that appeal lies as of right first to the Court of Appeal and thence to the Supreme Court.

However, in recent years, successive military governments have used a system of decrees and special tribunals to undermine these constitutional rights. In the Saro-Wiwa case, the government invoked Decree 2 of

1987. President Abacha personally nominated the members of the tribunal. Two were judges; the third, as required by the decree, was a military officer.

Section 8 of the decree provides that the validity of any decision of the tribunal may not be questioned in any court of law. Hence, no right to judicial review or appeal. Hence, the inevitable failure of all attempts by the defence to challenge in the ordinary courts the legality of the tribunal and its decisions.

Hence, the execution of the defendants within only 10 days of the convictions.

Curiously, the High Commission has experienced a recurrent difficulty in accurately describing to the public the nature of the tribunal. For example, in January it circulated a brief entitled "Trial of Ken Saro-Wiwa in the Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal", claiming that the tribunal was "made up of two serving High Court Judges". As in the advertisement the existence of a third, military, member was omitted.

It is important to publicise the true facts, not only in the interest

of accuracy but of justice: reliable reports suggest that in January the same tribunal will embark on the trial for capital murder of 19 other Ogoni activists.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL BIRNBAUM
Temple
London, EC4

The writer was an observer at the trials of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others on behalf of the Bar Human Rights Committee and the Law Society.

From Ms Ama Biney

Sir: The attempt by the Nigerian High Commission to set the record straight for the Federal Government of Nigeria in a half-page advertisement in your newspaper, is a despicable travesty of democracy. Nigeria, headed by Sani Abacha, has not only gravely wronged its own people but the rest of Africa. The ruling cabal is now seeking to rationalise its dastardly acts in the light of international uproar over the executions of the nine Ogoni activists.

General Abacha and his sib-

lings in the London Nigeria High Commission see no contradiction in the fact that they have the freedom to advertise in a British newspaper, yet prohibit Ogonis the right to mourn the deaths of their nine activists. They see no contradiction in the fact that they have outlawed the right of Nigerians to air contrary political views in Nigerian newspapers, yet they are allowed to air their distortions externally.

The present political crisis in Nigeria reveals that the problems of Africa have transcended the traditional concept of the sovereign nation-state. The political and economic problems faced by Nigeria are not unique to that country, though General Abacha continues to proclaim undue interference in the internal affairs of Nigeria. The problems abound all over the continent and that is why Nigeria cannot be left alone.

What concerns Nigeria concerns all Africans genuinely concerned with democracy.

Yours faithfully,
AMA BINEY
Africa World Review
London, SE1
6 December

Playwrights' capital work

From Mr Jonathan Meth
Sir: David Lister asks ("Lottery cash may fund new plays", 5 December) why shouldn't playwrights be left to the dictates of the marketplace? The system of state arts investment (I refuse to call it subsidy) in this country operates to provide resources to buildings and companies as the providers of the arts to the nation.

Practitioners, technicians and administrators employed by these buildings and companies are paid a salary, albeit not a very high one. Without a playwright, there can be no new work in theatre. Playwrights, however, are not part of the structural economic fabric of these organisations. They are brought in as hired hands, as and when others decide.

Good plays take time to evolve. They require development. They can and should take between six and 12 months to write. With very few exceptions at the uppermost echelon, playwrights are paid between £3,000 and £6,000 for a play.

It is widely acknowledged that Britain is fortunate enough to lead the world in this field. But on a freelance basis, without more opportunities to earn money, playwrights will inevitably move towards other media to make a living. This is the law of the marketplace, and it is why National Lottery funds to resource playwrights in the creation of capital assets, far from being elitist, is imperative if theatre is to thrive.

As the tabloids have clearly demonstrated, the lottery promulgates the myth that arts are an additional luxury, instead of vital to the health and wealth of our nation. Where does the real elitism lie—with playwrights earning a living wage for their work, or a windfall that allows the Government to continue to marginalise the arts via Budget cutbacks?

Yours faithfully,
JONATHAN METH
New Playwrights Trust
London, NW5

Church disclosure

From The Rev Roy Arnold

Sir: As the person responsible for the release of the Nine O'clock Services story to the press—tabloid and respectable—I have to say that I found Bryan Appleyard's article ("A church in psychiatric chaos", 28 November) ill-informed and unfair. He implies that the tabloid reported that Remarque remained *persona non grata* in Germany for 50 years after his book was publicly burned by the Nazis in 1933.

Not so. Remarque died in 1970, and his novel was required reading at my school in Germany during the early Fifties (the film version was shown at school as well). The Church of England uncovered the story when people in the NOS community began to talk to each other and to others in the Church of England hierarchy. Once it was established that a systematic abuse had been going on, the Diocese of Sheffield took rapid steps to look after the victims, to establish precisely what had gone on and to make a full and comprehensive statement to the media.

Mr Appleyard's contention that "but for the prurient nosiness of our tabloid press" the story would have gone undiscovered, amounts to a clear imputation that the first disclosure did not come from the church when, in fact, it did.

Yours faithfully,
ROY ARNOLD
Sheffield
28 November

Required reading

From Mr R. K. Wohlberg

Sir: One gets used to anti-German digs in the British press. A case in point is the report about the sale of the manuscript of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* ("Epic manuscript sold for £276,000", 2 December). You claim that Remarque remained *persona non grata* in Germany for 50 years after his book was publicly burned by the Nazis in 1933.

Not so. Remarque died in 1970, and his novel was required reading at my school in Germany during the early Fifties (the film version was shown at school as well).

Also, why do you not let your readers know who was the buyer? It was, in fact, purchased jointly by the state government of Lower Saxony and the Savings Bank of Osnabrück. Remarque's home town, to go on exhibition there in the local museum.

Yours faithfully,

R. K. WOHLBERG
Teddington, Middlesex

3 December

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax 0171-233 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Seeking the secrets of the universe

It has taken 20 years of work, \$1.6bn and 23 billion miles. Yesterday, the Galileo spacecraft entered the final phases of its mission as it plunged into Jupiter's orbit. Was it really worth all the fuss and the money?

Members of the US Congress are asking this question with an eye on the vast budget deficit and the politically sensitive squeeze on the nation's welfare spending. After all, why pay billions gazing into outer space when hack on planet Earth there are children who need feeding and old ladies who require medical treatment? It sounds cheap to juxtapose the images, but these are the real choices faced by America's cash-strapped politicians.

It is easy to argue for funding scientific projects that generate commercial returns. The satellites that circle the earth have all kinds of pay-offs. Weather forecasting and monitoring the ozone level and global warming are all far easier thanks to those machines in the sky. The sugar beet industry even claims to save a fortune by using satellite pictures to check when the crop is ripe. And, of course, Rupert Murdoch uses them to send us round-the-clock coverage of some of the world's major sporting events.

Satellites, sugar and soccer aren't much help in justifying Jupiter expeditions. The often quoted proposition that investing in space travel gave us non-stick frying pans as a spin-off is factually incorrect. But it is also crazy economics. The billions of dollars spent on space

travel could have been invested far more lucratively elsewhere. American scientists have even suggested that the cost of pouring all that brain power into space was to miss out on the emerging electronic technologies—and to cede the consumer electronics industry to Japan.

Of course, new improved consumer products aren't the only reason for investing in research. The scientific—if not economic—case for Galileo is overwhelming. We have the chance to discover the truth about that great whirling red spot on the planet's surface. And, if we are lucky, we may find some of the secrets of the universe lurking beneath Jupiter's clouds.

Where mysteries of the cosmos are at stake, scientists can draw on a wealth of public enthusiasm and support. After all, just think of all the films that have been made about space exploration. The success of *Star Trek* across the generations depended on "boldly going where no man has gone before". And the shelves of book shops are lined with accounts of the Big Bang and black holes. We are fascinated by the romance of the pursuit of pure knowledge and the beauty and secrets of the stars.

Not every space project will be worth the effort that goes into it. And the exact budget of the American space agency, Nasa, is a legitimate subject for regular critical debate. But the never-ending quest to discover new worlds and expand our understanding is a vital and worthwhile part of what makes us human.

Space exploration must boldly go on.

Dirty war fought on British soil

From Mr H. M. Mahdy

Sir: I would like to applaud Robert Fisk for his thorough reporting and analysis of the situation in Egypt (reports, 6 December). What troubles me, as a British citizen, is not only the barbarity of President Mubarak's regime, but that the Egyptian government is allowed to send its agents to practise their torture and shoot-to-kill tactics on British soil. The justification given is that Mr Mubarak's enemies are Islamic fundamentalists who are planning terrorist attacks.

One only needs to read Mr Fisk's coverage of the recent parliamentary elections in Egypt to know why the Egyptian environment is breeding terrorists

(reports, 28 and 29 November). The members of Muslim Brotherhood (a moderate Islamic group that condemns violence) who stood for parliamentary elections were sent to jail and hard labour by a military court for the hilarious reason of "holding anti-government meetings". Well, Mr Blair, Mr Ashdown et al should be extremely lucky that Mr Mubarak does not govern Britain.

Maybe there is not much that we can do for human rights in Egypt. But at least we should let President Mubarak know what we think of his government. We should withdraw any support, moral or material, to his regime. And, definitely, we must not allow his policemen/judges/executors to carry out their dirty war on British soil.

Yours faithfully,
H. M. MHDY
Glasgow

Moving furniture won't stop theft

From Dr Gary Slapper

Sir: Although crime figures have spiralled upwards over the last decade, government policy relating to the prosecution authorities is now set to describe a full critique ("Big boost for police in CPS shake-up", 5 December).

In 1985, prosecuting offenders was a task taken from the police and given to a new Independent authority, the Crown Prosecution Service. The rationale then was that the police were not the best suited to be prosecutors, as they would often have a commitment to winning a case where the evidence was weak. They were also not best placed to evaluate public policy considerations.

Now the Attorney-General is

about to install Crown prosecutors in police stations so as to improve the liaison between officers and prosecuting authorities". The obviously intended result is that staff of the CPS (known to many police officers as the "Criminals Protection Service") will be immersed in police culture and thinking.

It is the fault neither of the police nor of the Crown prosecutors that crime is an epidemic problem in the 1990s. So re-arranging this institutional furniture will have no appreciable impact on crime figures. Major political and economic changes are to blame for modern crime, two-thirds of which is domestic burglary and theft of and from cars.

Yours faithfully,
GARY SLAPPER
The Law School
Staffordshire University
Stoke-on-Trent

Solitary words that live on baleful tenterhooks, alack

Q: You are here to tell us about the work of the Single Word Protection Society?

A: That's right.

Q: Would you like to tell us something about the work of the Single Word Protection Society?

A: Certainly. Our aim is to stand up for those words in the English language that have been relegated to a single-use function and to plead for their reintegration into society.

Q: I see. Could you give us an example?

A: Of course. Take the word "dulcet", for example.

Q: But surely "dulcet" is quite a normal word? It's commonly used, isn't it?

A: Is it? Can you give me an example of its being used?

Q: Well, people sometimes do say, in a sort of mock-heroic way, "It's a long time since I heard your dulcet tones..."

A: And that's it.

Q: That's it. That is the only time "dulcet" is used. In conjunction with "tones". No one uses the word "dul-

cet" without "tones". No one says, "I heard your dulcet voice" or "Now hear the dulcet singing of the BBC Chorus". It's a single-use word. But why not extend it? After all, "dulcet" is just another word for sweet and gentle, isn't it? You could easily look at someone in a dulcet manner or lay your head on someone's dulcet lap.

Q: And you want us to use "dulcet" more often?

A: Not just "dulcet". There are hundreds of words that are condemned to a solitary existence, words which could do a perfectly good job if given the chance.

Q: Could you give us another example?

A: I'll give you a couple. Unwed. Unsung.

Q: Let me think, now. Unwed mothers? Unsung heroes?

A: Very good. Mothers are the only people who are unwed. Never fathers.

Imagine – the elder brother I never knew

Where were you when John Lennon was killed 15 years ago today? The playwright Alan Bleasdale remembers where he was, how he felt and why it still hurts to think about the hero he never met

I am possibly the only person in Liverpool of a similar age to John Lennon, had he lived, who claims never to have met him. Or, indeed, any of the Beatles.

Believe me, everyone else had met one of the Beatles by 1963. The whole of the sixth form of my grammar school seemed to spend their weekends at parties popping pills in the presence of John, Paul, George or Ringo.

Especially George, for boy George, to his eternal chagrin, was and always will be the youngest of the Beatles. He was therefore more likely to be the social victim of a sad 17-year-old pupil who was only there popping pills in the unlikely event that he was actually there at all, so that the pupil could stand taller and louder during school assembly on the following Monday morning.

This fame by association reached its zenith when a member of our chess club announced that his astute had impregnated Ringo Starr's mother's bitch. In the silence of castles and knights, someone else said that his mother was a close personal friend of Ringo's mother, and he knew for a fact that Ringo's mother did not have a dog of any description, and a fist-fight broke out.

Mind you, few ever spoke of John. For John was the leader of the pack. John was older, and John was dangerous and wore black leather. He did not suffer fools and schoolboys at all. Furthermore, he had the cruel power of sarcasm and that frowning "Who the fuck are you?" look upon his face.

No one knew then that he was hopelessly short-sighted and insecure and sentimental beneath the butch bravado and broken-nosed swagger. In 1963 he was never talked about his dreadful childhood.

Naturally, John was our total, complete and utter hero. Paul was far too pretty and always got the girls. Ringo brought out the worst snobbery that a grammar school education could formulate; and George, well, you know, George was always so young...

An only-child, I seemed to have spent most of my adolescence and some of my attempts at manhood in search of the older brother I never had. Lennon was an obvious focus

of that desire, although with hindsight I suspect that it would not have been much fun being John Lennon's younger brother. If he could have seen me to find me, he probably would have hit me just for being there. And then felt deeply sorry. So the legend goes.

However, throughout the following two decades, that is how I very quietly considered John Lennon. I did not actually expect him to turn up at Christmas or at

we heard the worst news of all about someone "famous" we had known or admired, loved or even hated.

When I first heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated I was at the Cavern Club ("Home of the Beatles") in Liverpool. Eric Morecambe? Outside our house, in reverse gear, parking the car, listening to the news on Radio 1 and wistfully wishing to reverse for ever and ever. Elvis Presley? I opened our front door one morning and my big teddy-boy cousin fell into my arms in a mess of tears. Albert Goldman, the deeply vile and grotesque biographer of both Presley and Lennon? I laughed out loud and went to the off-liscence.

John Lennon? Oh well.

Oh dear. For the first and only time that I can recall,

I woke up at three in the morning and went up to the attic to stare at my typewriter. I am accustomed to working at that time – as I write this it is 4.55am – but usually I would not have been to bed in between the thought and the process.

Relax. There was no premonition. Relax. I was not the walrus in my dreams, and "I'm My Life" was not

on the stereo. Lennon did not visit me upon a flaming pie. I was merely deeply worried about Act One, Scene Three.

So I soldiered on, armed only with tannin and nicotine, vaguely aware that my wife eventually woke and began to prepare our children for school. Just before eight o'clock I heard a wild, shocked and shocking scream from two floors beneath me. Convinced of a domestic accident, I hurtled down the stairs to be met on the landing by my wife as she blurted out the already brokenhearted news that John Lennon had been shot to death in New York City.

I cried like I did not know that I could cry... until then, death had stayed away from my vicinity since my grandmother died when I was seven. Maybe I had been saving it all up, to use it so ludicrously on this man whom I had, of course, not met, who was no doubt seriously flawed and certainly fatal.

I would, naturally, refuse to admit this at dinner parties, in public or in

I cried like I did not know that I could cry... until then, death had stayed away from my vicinity'

christenings and family gatherings, but he was the one I thought about, worried about, read about, was both bewildered and delighted by, and the only one whose records I still bought.

I lived in hope that despite the disappearances, the drugs and the drink and occasionally attempting to wear a tampon on his head in an American night-club, my secret older brother might one day grow up. I never thought that he would never grow old.

It would be gauche to admit this at dinner parties, perhaps, but I guess all of us know exactly where we were and what we were doing when



print, but I ended up later that long day and night spitting in crazed, impotent rage upon the first published picture of Lennon's murderer, Mark Chapman, in the local evening newspaper.

I will gladly leave it to others more cold and qualified than I am to explain why Lennon meant so much to so many total strangers. I do know that it is terribly easy to be sardonic and sneer at that muddled man – and at people like me who loved him from a distance. Yet still I do not really understand why it is that right now, all of 15 years later, at dawn's feeble attempt to turn to daylight, I still find myself wearing my handkerchief on my sleeve.

You may recall that on the Sunday following Lennon's death, thousands upon thousands of people congregated on the steps of the St George's Hall in Liverpool to pay tribute and homage. I was asked to go, but I was suspicious of some of the motives and also I did not want to flaunt my mourning as nakedly as I now seem to be doing.

However, a good friend of mine and his wife were there for the final massed chorus of "Imagine", which accidentally coincided with the Sunday licensing hours. They joined the people who flooded into the nearest public house, a sawdust place that was not best prepared to be a bastion in history.

In the far corner sat an elderly man much accustomed to solitary drinking. He may or may not have been nursing that night's first pint of Guinness and a packet of Woodbines, but he was certainly bewildered by the succession of people who wailed into the bar sobbing and mumble the mantra: "John is Dead".

Finally, this man in the far corner of the pub turned to my friend's wife and asked her what this was all about. Emotional, but not tired, she told him through her tears that it was because of John Lennon. John Lennon was dead.

The man in the corner thought about this information for a time and then turned to her and said "All this because of John Lennon? Fucking hell, girl, can you imagine the scenes when Ken Dodd goes?"

Lennon would have loved that. I would have loved it a lot more if it had not been about John Lennon – that older brother I never had. I still cannot quite believe he is not still here, getting it all right and getting it all wrong.

Engr. Inu, do you take me for a fool?

The letter is postmarked Lagos; it is addressed to me as Greer Germaine, care of my agent. Nothing unusual in that. The address can be found in any reasonably good reference library, even in Lagos, I imagine. No need to get nervous or imagine that somebody has sold my details to a blackmailing or white-slaving ring.

I should not divulge the contents of a letter sent to me in confidence, I know, but confidence is the name of this Nigerian's game, confidence trickery, and I reckon it is time you were told.

The letter purports to come from "Engr. Inu Mustapha". Engr. does not, in this case, stand for "engraved" but for "Engineer" – I think Engr. Inu writes, or rather prints out, as follows:

"Sir," – not the best beginning, you will agree – then under, in capitals, "Request for urgent business partnership". "First, I must solicit your strictest confidence in this transaction. This is by virtue of its nature as being utterly confidential and 'top secret'." (Alas, Engr. Inu, a little more research might have revealed that you were about to send your secret missive to a journalist who is also that leastek of vessels, a woman.) "You have been recommended by an associate who assured me in confidence of your ability and reliability to prosecute a transaction of great magnitude involving a pending business transaction requiring maximum confidence". In fewer words, "Someone tells me you are devious, greedy and stupid, with delusions of grandeur."

It is only proper at this point that I confess to a slight anti-Nigerian bias, not because a Nigerian

dictator has recently offed a number of dissidents, which included a writer – such misfortunes can befall the nicest of countries – but because I once came upon a large Nigerian youth bawling his eyes out by Lancaster Gate Tube station. He told me he had missed the bus laid on by his college to take him back to Darlington and had no money to get home and no idea how to get there. Amid tearful protestations of eternal gratitude he had showed me an identity card and assured me that I should write to his parents, who were high-ranking officials in Nigeria, and they would not only refund any money I should give him but reward me handsomely for my noble behaviour.

I, imagining him to be a human being more or less like myself, assured him that this would not be necessary. As I was on my way to Covent Garden, it was easy to take him in my taxi and drop him at King's Cross with £20 for the expenses of his journey. I wrote my name and address on a card so that he could return the money, which of course he never did. Now I come to think of it, he probably wasn't at college anywhere, least of all in Darlington, and the people whose names he was bandying about probably didn't exist.

Engr. Inu's ingratiations continue: "We are top officials of the Federal Contract Review Panel who are interested in importation of goods into our country with funds that are presently

trapped in Nigeria. In order to commence the transfer latest 7 (seven) banking days from the date of the receipt of the following information by Fax 234-1-4974907, Tel/Fax: 234-90-407309 your Banker's name, company's name, address, Account number and fax number."

I, who bank at a 17th-century institution where clients are escorted into the banking hall by an imposing gentleman dressed as if Beau Brummel had died but yesterday, did not know whether to laugh or cry at all of this. The notion of delivering up my cosseted account to be siphoned off by these blackguards was not so much preposterous as sacrilegious.

Nobody who does what I do works as hard as I do. I am interested in getting rich quick, even my lottery ticket is bought, when I can remember to buy it at all, in the name of my college. I once had a dream about becoming a millionaire and spent the whole night trying to work out what to do with my million, which turned into a million yards of red silk and was used to mop up the blood of slaughtered elephants, to my (in the dream) entire satisfaction.

Poor Engr. Inu had no way of knowing how wide of the mark his net had been thrown. But I have heard that the people who masquerade behind such masks as Engr. Inu have made money out of gullible Englishers who really did expect barrowloads of hard currency to be shovelled into their accounts from a country that clearly has squandered its vast assets and its considerable credit in ways not wildly dissimilar.

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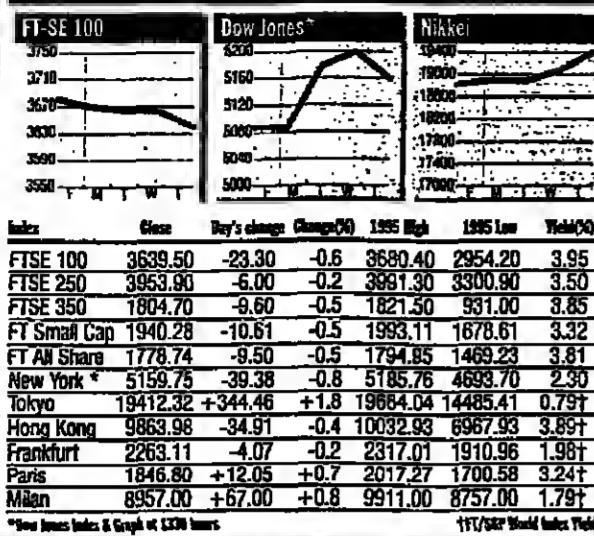
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Generation Why



MARKET SUMMARY

STOCK MARKETS



ROGER TRAPP and JOHN WILLCOCK

About 10,000 accountants are poised to protect themselves from damaging legal actions that have the potential to bankrupt them.

Price Waterhouse and Ernst & Young, which each have nearly 400 partners and about 4,000 other professional staff, are widely expected to announce next week that they have opted to follow the lead of American firms and set themselves up as limited liability partnerships.

This will mean legally registering their operations offshore. Under British law partners are only allowed to limit their liability if they take part in running the business.

The expected move follows KPMG's announcement earlier this year that it is incorporating its audit arm in an effort to give itself greater protection from spiralling negligence claims.

It means that, with Coopers & Lybrand, the UK's largest firm, also considering some form of incorporation, most of the leading firms are likely to have ceased to be conventional partnerships by this time next year. As a worldwide organisation, Arthur Andersen is understood to be in a more complex position but considering its options, while Touche Ross has consistently stated its opposition to abandoning partnerships.

Observers believe this could cover the whole audit business, the largest part of the firm. Alternatively, it could include the entire firm, embracing tax, consultancy and corporate finance work. Partners have been unwilling to turn their operations into limited companies because they would lose the tax and other advantages.

Outstanding claims

Firm	Claim
Price Waterhouse	Being sued as auditors of BCCI for \$3bn
Ernst & Young	Being sued as former auditors of BCCI
Say Haywood	Being sued as auditors of Poly Peck for \$20m
Say Haywood	Being sued as auditors of Astral
Ernst & Young	Being sued by Lloyd's names for £150m
Arthur Andersen	Being sued by Lloyd's names
Coopers & Lybrand	Being sued as auditors of Maxwell Communications
Coopers & Lybrand	Auditors of Barings – administrators considering action

Mr Brindle argued that this did not give a complete answer to the potential threat of bankruptcy facing partners in Big Six accounting firms from the many huge lawsuits on both sides of the Atlantic. He suggested that PW would soon have a more comprehensive scheme.

The claims have become such a problem that the profession is pressing for reform of the law of joint and several liability, under which an accountant can bear the total loss resulting from a corporate collapse. Because this would take such a long time to achieve, the profession is also campaigning for a halfway house – changing section 310 of the Companies Act 1985, in order to limit auditors' liability.

Labour MPs break ranks on Murdoch

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Westminster Correspondent

Labour MPs have broken ranks with the party hierarchy by coming out to condemn the Byzantine tax avoidance arrangements of Rupert Murdoch's News International.

When the *Independent* revealed last week that over the last decade News International made nearly £1bn in profits but paid just £11.74m in tax, Labour said nothing. The party that is usually quick to condemn City "fat cats" and corporate excess maintained a story silence.

Even the fact that News International, which owns the *Sun* and *Times* newspapers, paid no tax on profits of £779m in its last financial year, was not enough to stir Labour. Alistair Darling, the party's City spokesman, brushed aside the party's apparent lack of interest, explaining that "you must never design a tax system to get at one person. It is a matter of fundamental principle".

Cynics pointed to the growing rapprochement between Mr Murdoch and a Labour leadership anxious to ensure that the media baron's titles do not exhibit the same hostility in the general election as they did in 1992. The *Star* has always boasted that it was the paper "not won it" for the Tories.

The two sides' courtship has seen Mr Blair speak at an internal conference for senior executives of Mr Murdoch's empire in Australia, where the Labour leader was roundly cheered.

Stronger high street activity than expected from the Confederation of British Industry's distributive trades survey helped to dampen hopes of an early cut in interest rates. The evidence of an upturn for retailers combined with Eddie George's remarks to the Treasury Select Committee – widely interpreted as hinting that he would oppose a cut in rates when he meets the Chancellor next Wednesday – to push gilt yields down by half a point.

Retail sales volumes were up in November compared with a year ago, the CBI said. The balance of retailers who said sales were up rather than down jumped to 23 per cent compared with 16 per cent in October. The CBI said it represented the largest rise in sales since April.

Warning from Blue Circle

Blue Circle warned yesterday that its 1995 figures would be hit by a £63m provision to restructure its heating and bathrooms businesses, together with the underperforming home products division. The impact of the exceptional charge should be mitigated, however, by a one-off £55m profit from the sale of the company's landfill operation. The creation of "centres of excellence" for its different boiler and radiator products in the UK, France and Germany follows a review announced in September and the departure of Charles Young, the division's £193,000-a-year chief executive.

Investment column, page 26

Salomon cuts back in Asia

Salomon Brothers, the US investment bank, has cut 50 jobs in its Hong Kong office, and further positions throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Asian markets have performed badly in dollar terms this year, in contrast to strong earnings from the US market.

Brittan warns against EMU compacency

Sir Leon Brittan, vice-president of the European Commission, said there was a "dangerous state of compacency" in the City about European Monetary Union and the far-reaching effects it would have. Giving the inaugural Liffe City lecture, Sir Leon said: "EMU will be, whether you like it or not, a factor in your competitiveness equation and given the importance of the City to the UK economy as a whole, this is something that should weigh with us when we come to make the decision about whether and when to join."

Compass points upward

Compass, the contract catering company, boosted pre-tax profits by 31 per cent to £73.2m in the year to 1 October. Turnover climbed 64 per cent to £1.51bn, and the dividend was increased 13 per cent to 7.0p. Shares rose 3.5p to 450.5p.

Matra Marconi wins satellite order

Matra Marconi, the joint venture owned by GEC and Lagardere, has won a £100m order for satellites from the UK Ministry of Defence. The order adds to an existing £200m contract.

Investment column, page 26

French crisis 'threatens single currency'

The chief economist of Deutsche Bank has admitted that the worsening French crisis could destroy the dream of a European single currency because of instability in France and deepening doubts in Germany.

Investment column, page 26

Moving in at GUS: Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale



the High Court decision on Wednesday against Binder Hamlyn, whose 150 partners face ruin from a £105m bill for negligence. The firm is appealing the decision, but the judgement has set the rest of the industry running for cover.

Setting up on the other side of the Atlantic is not considered practical since – in the words of one senior partner – a court is likely to consider an audit firm operating in the UK as subject to UK law. But there is intense speculation that the firms may be planning to register themselves in an offshore financial centre closer to Britain, such as Liechtenstein, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

The expected move follows KPMG's announcement earlier this year that it is incorporating its audit arm in an effort

to give itself greater protection from spiralling negligence claims.

It means that, with Coopers & Lybrand, the UK's largest firm, also considering some form of incorporation, most of the leading firms are likely to have ceased to be conventional partnerships by this time next year. As a worldwide organisation, Arthur Andersen is understood to be in a more complex position but considering its options, while Touche Ross has consistently stated its opposition to abandoning partnerships.

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Ian Brindle, senior partner of Price Waterhouse, which with E&Y is facing a \$3bn claim over BCCI, recently told an "alumni" dinner of former Price Waterhouse people that the pioneering incorporation plan of KPMG did not go far enough. KPMG is to turn part of its auditing business into a limited-liability company, but this would cover audits only of its biggest clients.

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MPs attack
Bank over
Baring
collaps



Executive pool (left to right): Leonard van Geest, Littlewoods chairman, acting group managing director Bill Hartley, and finance director Jim Michie at yesterday's egm in which the £1.2bn bid from ex-chief executive Barry Dale was voted out

Moores reject Littlewoods bid

NIGEL COPE

The Moores family re-entered

its grip on the Littlewoods empire yesterday when it voted against a £1.2bn offer for the company from its former chief executive, Barry Dale.

At an emergency meeting held on an icy day in Liverpool, the 32 family shareholders voted not to open the company's books to Mr Dale.

The family also overturned a resolution that would have encouraged other bidders to come forward.

Board members voted by an overwhelming majority to discourage any other offers and urged them to be withdrawn in order to end uncertainty.

Littlewoods' chairman, Leonard van Geest, said after the meeting: "The outcome of the meeting shows that shareholders have strongly supported the board's advice to reject the bid [Barry Dale]."

The voting at today's meeting also clearly shows that shareholders have no immediate intention that the company

should be sold. The board now expects other potential offers to recognise the wishes of shareholders and not prolong the period of uncertainty generated by Bidco's approach."

Commenting on the defeat, Mr Dale said: "The result was not surprising but we remain actively interested and we'll see what happens."

The vote is also a blow to Sir David Alliance's £1.1bn offer for the group, which he made in conjunction with Iceland, the frozen food retailer.

It was a tense day on Mersey-

T&N awaits \$185m ruling

MAGNUS GRIMOND

An asbestos claim for \$185m (£116m) against T&N, the UK automotive engineering group, was last night hanging on the judgement of a US jury.

The case is one of the biggest, dating back to the days when, as Turner & Newall, the company was the world's biggest supplier of asbestos. It involves material installed in 1959 in the 60-storey Chase Manhattan Plaza, the New York headquarters of the bank of the same name.

It is likely to be taken as a precedent for other cases, the jury was sent out at midday on Wednesday and was still deliberating when the court reconvened early yesterday. But the shares bounced 10p to 130p on optimism that T&N may not have to pay the full amount after a much larger claim was settled at a fraction of the previous estimated liability.

A \$600m suit brought against 37 defendants, including T&N,

has resulted in the UK group settling for £6.5m, against earlier estimates that it might have to pay up to £50m. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey had brought the case over asbestos installed in the three New York airports under its control and its headquarters in the World Trade Center.

In the Chase Manhattan case, \$75m in damages and a further \$110m in punitive damages are being sought. The bank has claimed that T&N knew or should have known that the product was dangerous and failed to warn the occupants. In its defence, the British company argued that Chase had given assurances to employees, customers and clients that the building, which remains in use, was safe.

Shares in T&N have slumped from a high of 260p in 1994 after it stunned the market a year ago by announcing it would be forced to make an additional £100m provision to cover asbestos claims.

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INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Merger speculation lifts GUS

Almost £200m was added to the stock market value of Great Universal Stores yesterday as board changes at Britain's largest mail-order company triggered speculation that it was poised to merge with the retailing house Next, writes Nigel Cole.

Sparking the excitement was the announcement that Lord Wolfson of Marylebone, who is 68, will step down as chairman of GUS next summer and be succeeded by his cousin, Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, who is currently chairman of Next. GUS's deputy chairman,

Richard Pugh, moved swiftly to dampen merger hopes. He said last night: "We have no present interest in any merger. I can't see a great advantage in it."

GUS shares closed 18p higher at 632p. Next rose 5p to 449p.

Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale's appointment was welcomed in the City, which has become frustrated by the lack of openness and caution at GUS. One analyst said: "It is brilliant news. The mail order business needs to be modernised and it is good that they have got someone who has a history of turning things round."

مكتبة من الأصل



Audit fees are not as poor as most accountants would have you believe, but for many partners they no longer justify the risk of being held liable for somebody else's cock-ups'

Auditors seek an escape route from retribution

The 1980s made the business of auditing, never particularly respected outside the narrow world of accountancy, into a positively disreputable one. Rightly or wrongly, auditors were held partly responsible for the spate of fraudulent insolvencies that began to roll from the mid-1980s onwards.

Why didn't the auditors spot the problems, how is it possible for a company to be given a clean audit only to go bust a few months later, and what do we pay these people for not to give fair warning that all is not as it seems? Was the general thrust of the criticism? The legacy is a string of legal actions for alleged negligence, some of them of gigantic proportions.

In the hunt for retribution and compensation, auditors are a soft and easy target. The 150 former and current partners of Binder Hamlyn who face financial ruin following a £105m High Court judgment may have captured headlines, but the amount is a flea-bite compared with others waiting in the wings. The scramble among big firms towards the haven of limited liability reinforces the impression of highly-paid professionals attempting to wriggle out of their obligations. Always there when lucrative fees are in the offing, however disreputable the client, it is hard to see these people for dust once the balloon goes up. In some cases the audit firms are doubly open to criticism since by association they lend credibility and respectability to those who might otherwise be considered suspect.

While all this is fair enough comment, however, it is equally reasonable for the big firms to seek ways of limiting exposure to the "nuclear" claim. The partnership structure, in this country at least, positively attracts the big negligence lawsuit since the potential pot of damages is so large - not only the assets of the firm can be claimed, but those of any employee with partnership status, too. Audit fees are not as poor as most accountants would have you believe, but for many partners they no longer justify the risk of being held liable for somebody else's cock-ups.

Limiting the liability without surrendering the considerable tax benefits of partnership is a far from easy thing, however. In other countries, such as the US, partnerships can have their cake and eat it; they can keep the tax and other benefits of partnership and limit their liability at the same time. One solution, therefore, is to go offshore. As KPMG appears to have acknowledged in rejecting it, the problem with this approach is that it looks suspicious.

Though some territories such as the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man have long had their arrangements accepted by the British courts, it is difficult to escape the view that taking this step looks like running away. Even those now understood to be considering such an approach are keen to point out that they want none of the tax advantages associated with such havens for fear that would diminish their standing. Furthermore, it is by no means clear the British

courts would in practice accept such a cosmetic limit on liability.

Reform of the law of joint and several liability to allow limited partnership is the obvious long-term solution, but whether sympathy for the plight of accountants and lawyers is sufficient to create the parliamentary time for it seems open to question. In the meantime, accountants need to do more to rehabilitate the whole process of audit. Public expectations of what auditors do and what can be expected of them may be unrealistically high, but by the same count, past failures are so dramatic that the scope for improvement must still be considerable. If accountants are to get the privilege of limited liability, they should also be willing to take on board the extra burden of ensuring that companies have adequate internal controls - a Cadbury recommendation which most auditors are resisting fiercely.

For Lord Wolfson read Lord Wolfson

On the face of it, the management succession announced yesterday by Great Universal Stores was just what you would expect from a family business. One Lord Wolfson, 68, steps down as chairman. Another Lord Wolfson (his 59-year-old cousin) steps up to take over the family firm. Surely this is a classic example of a fuddy-duddy, nepo-

tistic business dynasty ignoring the needs and wishes of external shareholders and looking after its own? Not quite.

While it is true that the board did not exactly scour the globe for an external candidate and says it voted unanimously for Wolfson, there are a number of things that make this case different. First GUS has done well to keep the business in the family thus long. Many business dynasties founder when they reach the third generation as they run out of plausible candidates to run the company. Younger members have different agendas, or want to cash in their stake. One need look no further than the strife-ridden Littlewoods for an example of what can go wrong.

Asprey's, the jeweller, has also fallen out of family control after 200 years. Pilkington, Sainsbury's is a rare example of a large public company that has flourished under family ownership, though it, too, has had problems recently. The remarkable thing about GUS, founded in the early part of the century, is that it has lumbered on quite nicely and in its latest Lord Wolfson has found a third generation who is, if anything, more highly regarded than his predecessors.

Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale to give him his full title, is clearly not the family duffer. He spent 18 years at GUS and became chairman of its key mail-order business before leaving in 1978. He was later chief of staff at the political office of 10 Downing Street

for six years. More recently he has overseen the recovery of Next, the once stricken high street retailer where he is chairman.

He is also a more open, City-friendly type. You never know, shareholders might actually find out what is going on in this notoriously uncommunicative company once he gets into the chair. His appointment could also mark a change of direction for GUS.

Under Sir Isaac who bought a controlling stake in the company in the 1930s, GUS was an aggressive takeover operator. Under the current chairman it has been a more cautious animal, eking up profits each year and squirreling away a £1bn cash pile. It has also ignored the City, only recently bowing to pressure to enfranchise its non-voting shares. Remarkably, its first analysts meeting was just three years ago and even then told the audience precious little.

Things could be about to change.

Cryptic George keeps City guessing

Attempting to reading meaning into what Eddie George says seems to have become the latest version of Kremlinology. It should perhaps be called Bankology. Whether his comments to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee means he is going to oppose a base rate cut at his meeting with the Chancellor next week is still anyone's guess, however.

Mr Martin Landau – apology

In the item "Gowrie gets his teeth into the property world" in the City Diary on 26 October we referred to Mr Martin Landau, the Deputy Chairman of Development Securities Plc.

We regret the item's suggestion that Mr Landau was to blame for the loss which the Church Commissioners suffered in connection with a speculative development in Kent. We now accept that the suggestion was untrue and we apologise to Mr Landau.

'Gambler' holds 25% stake in Christies

DAVID HELLIER

Joseph Lewis, the man who has taken his stake in Christies, the fine art auction house, to more than 25 per cent this week, is known to his friends as an enthusiastic gambler. "He just loves gambling. He'd bet on two friends climbing up a wall," one friend said yesterday.

He is said to be a heavy investor in the currency markets, where he takes large speculative positions and he is also said to be keen on betting on American football. Some of his friends say he is wealthier than the legendary currency speculator, George Soros.

Christies yesterday confirmed that Mr Lewis had increased his stake in the company to 25.32 per cent and later said it was in regular contact with its largest shareholder.

Peter Blythe, finance director, said Christies was in regular contact with all its large shareholders, including Mr Lewis.

Asked if Mr Lewis's investment had put the company on his radar, Mr Blythe referred to a statement made recently by one of Mr Lewis's representatives. This, he said, had suggested his investment was a friendly, rather than unfriendly, one.

"He has bought over the last 18 months and the share price is higher now than for most of that period," Mr Blythe said.

Mr Lewis, who is London-born but Bahamas-based, has added 12 million shares to his 41.5 million holding in the past week. When he first started buying shares in Christies, he picked them up at around 150p through the small London brokers, Hargreave Hale. Yesterday they traded unchanged at 213p.

MPs attack Bank over Barings collapse

PAUL WALLACE and JOHN EISENHAMMER

The Bank of England came under renewed attack yesterday over its handling of the Barings affair from the influential Treasury Select Committee.

Highlighting concerns about weaknesses exposed in the Bank's supervision, the committee said it intended to reopen its Barings inquiry in the new year. This is expected to involve calling some of the most senior former Barings' executives to give evidence.

Sir Thomas Arnold, the Conservative chairman of the select committee, said the investigation would focus on the "apparent discrepancy" between the findings of the Singapore investigation into Barings and the one conducted by the Bank of England's Board of Banking Supervision.

In a hard-hitting statement to Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, who was giving evidence to the committee on the Budget, Sir Thomas said: "We are concerned that the Bank has allowed some institutions to operate within an 'informal' control system and taken at face value management platitudes about the sources of their profit without the rigorous scrutiny we believe necessary."

He reiterated the committee's view that the improvement it wished to see in banking supervision might require stripping the Bank of England of its supervisory responsibilities and the establishment of a new, separate body with enhanced powers and a more thorough approach to its work."

Eddie George said he now regretted using the word "witchhunt" in the previous hearing over the summer. He said the Bank would be producing a report to the Board of Banking Supervision before the end of the year outlining the actions already taken to implement the 17 recommendations set out in the report.

Arthur Andersen, the management consultant, has been called in by the Bank to suggest ways of improving its supervisory systems.



Andrew Thomas, Greensill's chairman and chief executive (left), and Peter Greenall, managing director, yesterday announced that profits have passed £100m for the first time. Analysts believe Greensill's shares could become a constituent of the FT-SE 100 index next year. The company's market value has almost quadrupled to nearly £1.6bn since it pulled out of brewing six years ago to concentrate on pub retailing and leisure activities. Profits in the year to 29 September rose from £75m to £100.5m. Investment Column, page 26

Photograph: Edward Webb

Biotech thanks investors for staying

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Keith McCullagh, chief executive of British Biotech, yesterday thanked institutional investors for staying with the company over the long term - just days after two of his boardroom colleagues made a £3.2m short-term profit on share sales.

But Mr McCullagh did not appear embarrassed by the ac-

tion of his fellow directors. He vigorously defended their actions, denying that they showed any lack of commitment to the company.

James Nohle, finance director, made a profit of £1.7m and Peter Lewis, head of research and development, pocketed £1.5m on Monday when they sold shares resulting from the exercise of options. The move

came after a 70 per cent jump in the shares following the release of initial trial results for marimastat, one of the company's drugs.

Now under development, the treatment could be a breakthrough in the treatment of cancer. Mr McCullagh suggested yesterday the drug could have a market worth £1.8bn.

He said the board was "en-

tirely comfortable" with the commitment of the two men involved in cashing in options. Both were highly talented individuals.

"They are both probably the most talented executives in their field today. It is in large part due to them that we are in the strong position we are in today," he said. Part of their remuneration comes through a

long-term share option scheme.

Mr McCullagh said at a briefing given by the National Association of Pension Funds.

The scheme has been discussed and approved by the two main institutional investor bodies, the NAPF and the Association of British Insurers, as well as being cleared by shareholders at annual general meetings.

Takeover nets Cluff £2.5m

Algy Cluff, founder and chairman of Cluff Resources, stands to gain £2.5m from shares and options following the launch of Ashanti Goldfields of an agreed bid for the goldmining group.

The importance of the issue was underlined by the decision of Cedric Brown, British Gas's chief executive, to attend the meeting. He was accompanied by Harry Moulton, managing director of the British Gas pipeline arm, Transco. Transco has argued that the systems required to allow multiple competitors into the marketplace needed more time for testing.

Industry View, page 26

iry watchdog, who also attended the meeting, is also thought to have become irritated by the company's attitude.

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Industry View, page 26

mugged, but that is capitalism for you. It is very sad to lose independence, having done so well after starting in what were very difficult circumstances."

He added: "They are paying a fair price. The offer clearly vindicates the considerable effort we have invested in Africa over the years."

The offer is one new Ashanti share for every 12 Cluff shares with a full cash alternative of 105p. The price represents a premium of 14 per cent over the middle market value on Wednesday. Cluff's shares rose 12p to 104p.

Door-to-door to Dubai.

Emirates
THE FINEST IN THE SKY



business

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Plodding GEC needs new blood

Another plodding performance from GEC, yesterday only underlined impressions that Lord Weinstock's collection of defence and electronics operations is stagnating.

With the troublesome succession issue set aside until next year, it was time to focus on the core businesses. While some progress was made, there was nothing in the figures to suggest that the unexceptional growth pattern of recent years was about to change.

The 13p rise in the share price to 314.5p was as much relief as anything else, and simply made up the ground lost during the pessimistic run-up to these figures, taking the price back to where it had stuck for much of the year.

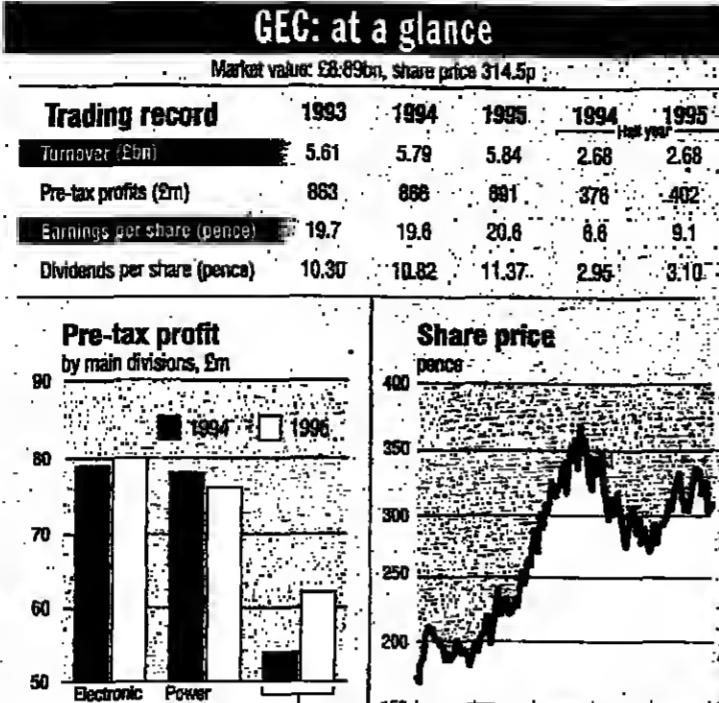
Half-year profits rose 6.3 per cent to £402m, but when the contribution from the shipbuilder VSEL is stripped out the underlying numbers are down. The biggest boost to profits again came from the GPT telecommunications operation - the 60/40 joint venture with Germany's Siemens - where the drive for exports lifted pre-tax profits by £8m to £62m. Ironically it was GPT's chairman who fell on his sword last month after the succession row. The South-east Asian markets are growing strongly and GEC said great efforts were being made in the region.

But it was a different story at the defence and power systems divisions, both mature businesses where margins are under tough international pressure. Defence profits were up only 1.1m to £89m, while the fall at power systems from £78m to £70m was particularly disappointing. Marconi and GEC Alsthom both faced higher provisions for development costs on contracts, though profits and margins should start to improve from next year.

The company has been underperforming the market for some time, while investors await news of how a rejuvenated board might inject some dynamism into the company. There is tremendous potential within the group of businesses but the suspicion remains that new blood is needed to unlock the earnings potential.

After yesterday's analysts' meeting, GEC watchers said Lord Weinstock appeared to have at least a grip on the company as ever, and he had nothing to say about when his successor would be announced.

GEC's order book, boosted by the acquisition of VSEL, remains strong at £1.38bn, though it is always difficult to know how this will translate into profits. The company's famous cash pile had fallen by £223m to £1.2bn since the end of March; and its share of net cash in joint ventures fell by £194m to £1.28m. A 5 per cent increase in its dividend to 3.1p was in line with forecasts.



Group full-year profit forecasts of around £970m, with earnings of 22.5p, put the shares on a forward multiple of 14. That is a discount to the market but an appropriate one. Fairly priced.

Greenalls closes in on top table

By this time next year Greenalls Group should be rubbing shoulders with the top brass of corporate UK. From being lost in a time warp under heavy family influence six years ago, the group now sports a market capitalisation of close to £1.6bn, tantalisingly close to a coveted place in the Footsie.

While the steep climb through the ranks owes a great deal to acquisitions, it would be churlish not to give credit to the board's strategic vision - starting when Greenalls abandoned brewing following the Beer Orders and bought out the family investors' favourable voting rights to make the company's paper a tradeable currency.

Results for the year to September, announced yesterday, passed another milestone in the company's transformation, with taxable profits clearing £100m for the first time by a margin of £500,000. The previous year's £74.8m included an extra week's trading.

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unit trusts/data

Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING		DOLLAR			D-MARK	
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	15378	10-5	25-23	1000	-	-
Canada	22026	15-11	34-19	12673	1-1	1-1
Germany	22168	54-47	133-129	14765	24-22	68-63
France	29427	21-22	64-65	14639	25-25	85-86
Italy	24459	81-96	235-265	12965	55-72	133-135
Japan	155-90	92-97	237-230	10185	52-51	57-55
ECU	12024	13-8	26-22	12780	2-4	54
Belgium	45595	13-10	31-36	22650	57-47	150-130
Denmark	65823	134-94	337-243	55813	48-28	125-75
Netherlands	22332	70-61	171-168	15148	53-50	84-79
Ireland	32675	12-9	24-18	15355	4-5	8-11
Norway	32481	127-75	344-298	63320	35-10	180-80
Spain	18825	44-53	135-151	22251	57-42	133-117
Sweden	10384	78-22	151-152	52222	55-63	440-460
Switzerland	17854	71-64	151-152	13822	37-35	105-101
Australia	20303	9-21	43-43	13535	19-21	54-56
Hong Kong	11294	57-55	176-124	27345	2-2	55-55
Malaysia	39025	0-6	0-0	25327	6-14	80-80
New Zealand	23770	22-37	87-112	15466	30-32	83-80
Saudi Arabia	53682	0-0	0-0	31701	2-7	9-14
Singapore	25784	0-0	0-0	14633	4-80	103-85

OTHER SPOT RATES

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	15884	10001	Nigeria	133223	570000
Austria	55597	101428	Greece	56522	62550
Brazil	14857	03685	Pakistan	528807	34233
Cuba	127876	8835	Philippines	403004	212000
Egypt	52307	34075	Portugal	532588	51400
Finland	65247	43368	Qatar	53984	38421
Ghana	21025	14100	Russia	706434	450000
Greece	355336	23250	South Africa	56383	38955
India	635816	348300	Taiwan	418292	273000
Kuwait	04261	03004	QAE	56500	38731

Tourist Rates

E. Blye
Australia (Defect) 20000

Austria(Dollars)	15,000	Germany(Mark)	22500	Norway(Kroner)	22500
Bulgaria(Francs)	4,5000	Greece(Drachma)	300,000	Portugal(Escudos)	222,000
Canada(Dollars)	2,0000	Hong Kong(Dollar)	17,200	Spain(Pesetas)	183,000
Cyprus(Pounds)	6,0000	Ireland(Pound)	03,400	Sweden(Kronor)	14,000
Denmark(Kroner)	8,0000	Italy(Lira)	240,000	Switzerland(Francs)	17,300
Holland(Golden)	3,4200	Japan(Yen)	154,000	Turkey(Lira)	228,000
Finland(Virka)	6,5000	Mexico(Peso)	0,5300	United States(Dollars)	15,000

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	6%	822	5½%	742	Netherlands	5%	825	5½%	830
US	5½%	551	5½%	588	Spain	12½%	860	10½%	875
Japan	6½%	138	4½%	228	Italy	11½%	1024	10½%	1122
Australia	7%	722	7½%	821	Belgium	7½-%	1025	8½%	885

Source: IHS INC. Market Research.

	Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	6 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Sterling CDs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local Authority Deps	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Discount Market Deps	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	6%	6%	-	-
Dollar CDs	-	-	6%	6%	-	-
ECU Linked Dep.	-	-	6%	6%	6%	6%

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	EstContracts traded	Open Interest
Long Gilt	11-01	111-11	10,28	5394
German Bond	98.71	99.05	96.45	15,220
J.G.Bond	12.95	12.15	12.95	255
Indexed Bond	105.24	106.15	105.59	37,685
SM Sterling	98.54	98.65	98.53	12,665
SM Euro 5	94.26	93.67	92.81	2,223
SM Euromark	98.07	98.07	98.05	0
E.C.U.	98.93	98.34	98.31	13,000
Euro Spt	94.69	94.80	94.63	153
FF-SE 100	92.88	94.84	94.75	704
FF-SE 250	92.82	92.95	92.80	5385
Euribor	98.92	98.55	98.50	16,032

Liffe FT-SF Index Options

Settlement price: 3641.0		closing offer price		Call/Put Total/vote	
Series		3600	3650	3700	3750
December	100/3	55/9	21/27	5/65	...
January	125/27	92/42	81/61	37/88	...
February	148/37	113/52	53/71	80/98	...
March	170/54	138/72	106/82	82/118	...

Commodities

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange						
Stkmen		Cash	& miles	Values	LME Stocks	chg
Alu	HG	1845-1945	1578-79	45533	583700	- 3000
Alu	Alloy	1410-20	1450-55	825	57040	+ 460
Copper	A	2978-88	2894-95	57973	228000	+ 225
Lead		7375-7395	725-25	18223	150875	- 250
Nickel		8100-10	8220-25	9083	47666	- 234
Tin		6310-20	6325-35	5296	12360	- 210
Zinc		1014-15	10385-1039	15395	922250	- 1300
Standard Commodity		CS	SDs	SV	Stock volume & change in tonnes	
Exchange rate:		1.0865	14.08	12130	at Tuesday 5 December	

PRECIOUS METALS							
per Oz	Az	\$	£	Coins	\$	£	
Platinum	42.00	257.25	Britannia	404	253	Krugerrands	381.82 246.05
Palladium	19.85	85.75	Britannia.5 oz	203	132	Sova	89.94 58.61
Silver spot	5.34	3.41	Britannia.25 oz	103	57	Nobles	403.78 252.72
Gold Bufln	388.70	252.75	Britannia.10 oz	49	32	Maple Leaf	281.404 254.63
							Swiss, Spirit & Son

AGRICULTURAL					
Cocoa	Coffee	Banana	Potatoes	Potatoes	

ICE Stone ICE Stone
Dec 685 Jan 2053

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100 Largest Insurance Funds						
Rank	Mid	Mid	Other	Stock	Mid	Mid
1	State Life Managed \$4	782	7625	London Life Mutual	8447	8420
2	Key National Managed	1364	1823	M&G Managed Bond	8220	8227
3	First Franklin Managed	5437	26525	M&G Managed Income Fund Ser A	8214	8214
4	First Franklin Life	1897	2102	Merchant Inv Managed	8214	8214
5	State Life Inv 32.3 Way	8501	1842	W&M Managed	8178	8178
6	Key Multiple Investments	8233	1042	NFI Managed	8125	8125
7	First Franklin Managed	1024	1025	North Growth Managed	8124	8124
8	CA ESL Balanced Gr	7623	8467	PLU Managed	8124	8124
9	CA ESL Disc 3%	1442	1843	Prudential Unico	7881	8014
10	First Franklin Managed	7620	7623	Prudential Union	7745	7745
11	Prudential Managed	5220	6227	Prudential Unico Managed Life	7687	7618
12	First Fores Inv Sec 2	5213	8507	NFI Managed	7684	7685
13	First Fores Managed Inv S2	5218	3024	Post Mutual Gross	7404	7404
14	Prudential	3762	3762	Post Mutual Fund	7389	7389
15	First Med Fid Supplies	3724	3342	Prudential Metal Managed	7285	7284
16	ESI Managed	2621	3623	Prudential Ass Prudential Managed	6267	5544
17	Standard Market Managed	1564	1523	Prudential Inv Managed	5251	4713
18	Standardia Managed \$4	6251	48223	Regions Managed \$1	5021	5021
19		1225	1225	Regions Managed	4821	4846

Whl Managed A	1000	1000	Royal Hart Op Income Div
Inv Managed	1000	1000	Royal LIn Managed
Princ Managed	2000	2000	Royal Scriven Growth Managed

Star Equity Managed	2615	2627	2627	2627
Star Managed	2245	2725	2607	2607
Managed	744	763	2613	2613
FCGI Required Managed	875	875	2614	2608
Prob Fwd Managed	3265	3217	2615	2615
Managed	226	2624	2624	2624
Fidelity	845	2624	2624	2624
Foreign & Colonial	863	2645	2622	2622
Managed	3053	2650	2613	2613
Int'l Sel \$1	221	2655	2613	2613
Personal	204	2653	2613	2613
E LA Managed	7043	7735	2613	2613
State Assisted Managed	194	8048	2613	2613
Standard Managed A	6216	8057	2613	2613
Standard/Finger Managed	6705	7004	2613	2613
Standard/Finger Mkt Growth	2235	2613	2613	2613
Life Global Managed A	5255	8020	2613	2613
MFC Managed	1445	8025	2613	2613
Orchid Stl Anstl Managed	1461	8026	2613	2613
Orchid Stl James Managed	216	8217	720 Hanover	2613
Retired Managed B2	5945	8217	720 Hanover	2613
Stl & Gen Managed 32	5265	8244	United Fund Managed	2613
Party Managed	5123	8293	Westway Managed	2613
Party Select Security A	1603	3220	Wesco Investors Managed S2	2613
Prob Mngd	1825	3273	Wescon Investor Unit	2613
Prob Mngd 3	2015	3793	Wescon Fund K1 Managed	2613
Prob Mngd 4	2013	2625	Wescon Unit Fund Managed	2613
Prob Mngd 5	2015	2625	Wescon Unit Fund Managed	2613

Smith attempts to steady Gascoigne

Football

DAVID MCKINNEY

Walter Smith yesterday sat down with Paul Gascoigne in an effort to direct his 24.5m signing back on to a steady course. The intervention of the Rangers manager, who declined to reveal the outcome, was overdue for a player whose reputation afforded him the benefit of the doubt when he arrived at Ibrox in the summer, but who has been increasingly trying the patience of his employers.

His dismissal from the Champions' League match at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday was a culmination of pressure on and off the field, and if Gascoigne feels victimised by referees, the Scottish Football Association and the media, he also fails to realise the self-inflicted nature of the publicity.

Gascoigne is the most expensive purchase in the history of Scottish football, and as such has rarely been out of the headlines. He created uproar in a pre-season friendly when he mimicked the playing of a flute at Ibrox, the problems in his personal life were well-publicised, and his actions against Aberdeen on 11 November were scrutinised by the SFA and the Procurator Fiscal.

More recently, the SFA has seen fit to investigate claims from a member of the public that a photograph showing Gascoigne patting the backside of Hearts' Alan Lawrence is an indication of the player bringing the Champions' League, not against Partick Thistle.

Gascoigne did have one piece of good news yesterday — the SFA are to take no action over his bottom-pinchings escapade.

Dreams of Wembley for Bishop Sutton

Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

While the four remaining non-League clubs in the FA Cup — Enfield, Woking, Cinderford and Gravesend — prepare for next week's second-round replays, 64 teams for whom an appearance at Wembley is a far more realistic dream will be engaged in the third round of the FA Vase tomorrow.

Only one of the tournament's previous winners will be in action: Didsi, the 1994 victors, travel to Slade Green. Neither of last season's finalists are involved: Oxford City have been promoted to the FA Trophy while the Vase holders, Arlessey, were knocked out in the second round by Thamesmead.

Another shock result at that stage saw Dorking, who only three seasons ago gave Peter Shilton's Plymouth side a tough game in the FA Cup, lose 2-0 in a replay at Bishop Sutton.

Gascoigne's six months of shame

1 NOVEMBER: Six-month card for David's transfer from Middlesbrough to Newcastle is given. Newcastle's new manager, John Hartson, declines to give Gascoigne a friend's ticket to the FA Cup tie between Middlesbrough and Rangers in December.

13 NOVEMBER: First yellow card as a ranger scores in the 1-0 defeat by Gillingham. Suspended for a week.

15 NOVEMBER: Yellow card as a ranger scores in the 1-0 defeat by Gillingham. Suspended for a week.

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26 NOVEMBER: First red card as a ranger scores in the 1-0 defeat by Gillingham. Suspended for a week.

28 NOVEMBER: Yellow card as a ranger scores in the 1-0 defeat by Gillingham. Suspended for a week.

29 NOVEMBER: Yellow card as a ranger scores in the 1-0 defeat by Gillingham. Suspended for a week.

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On Monday: 24-page sports section

CRICKET: England batsmen unable to maintain interest on cloying surface that bowler DeFreitas belatedly finds is to his liking

Thorpe thrives on damp ground

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Paarl
England 263-8 v Boland

The supreme effort needed by the voortrekkers to breach the lofty Drakenstein mountains that flank this pleasant ground made them a determined and hardy bunch, not given to failure. Although these are qualities Michael Atherton has been preaching and practising since assuming the England captaincy, his team do not seem able to follow their leader.

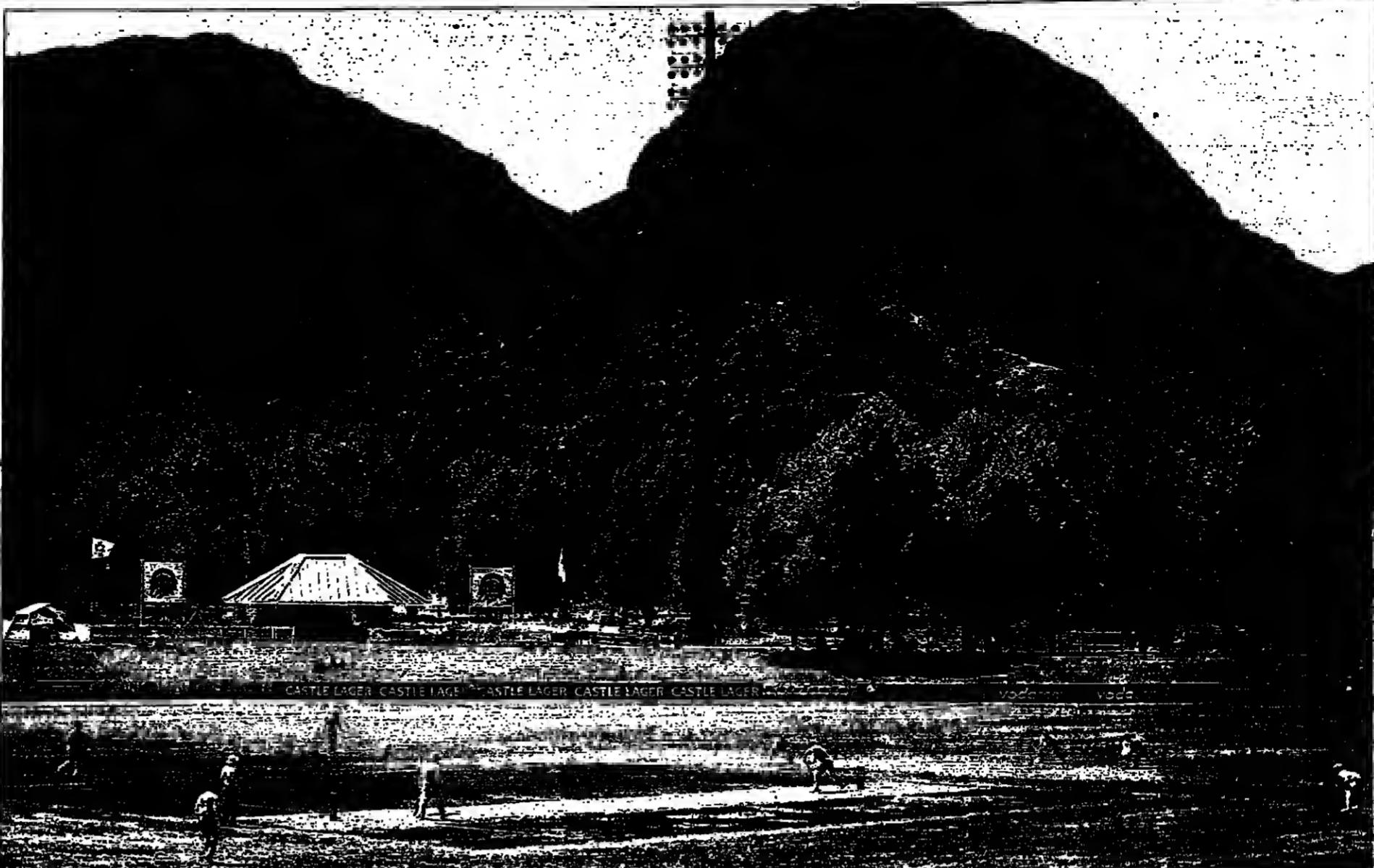
Albert was not playing yes-

terday as England, after the tortuous struggle of last Monday, seemed unable to maintain interest on a pitch whose surface behaved like drying putty. Only Graham Thorpe and Jack Russell seemed intent on making the undemanding Boland bowlers work for their wickets with Thorpe scoring 56 and Russell batting close to three hours for his 45.

This ground is only in its second first-class season. Last year, the equivalent match here against New Zealand had to be abandoned, the umpires ruling the pitch too dangerous after several batsmen were struck in the throat. To prevent this happening, the groundsman has taken to watering the pitch just before the start, and already this season two matches have been delayed because of his lavish use of the hosepipe.

If the surface was damp and sporty, it did not show, for the opening hostilities from Phil DeFreitas were muted, the Derbyshire man quickly opting for line and length after seeing Robin Smith bludgeon his opening partner, the lanky Scharf Willoughby, for three quick boundaries.

Willoughby fed Smith's off-side repertoire as if it were a slot machine with a saucy smile and England raced to fifty in only 54 balls. But just as Smith promised his most fluent knock



Backdrop to Boland: England play out their first innings as the cricket is second best to the scenery at Paarl yesterday

Photograph: Clive Mason/Allsport

of the tour he was bowled for 39, by a beauty from Billy Stelling that seamed away off the pitch to hit off-stump.

The dismissal meant an early opportunity for John Crawley to show his many supporters here, many of whom are sporting closely cropped heads, that he has the kind of credentials, if not the most politically correct haircut, to make the England No 3 spot his own. All looked well,

but after cracking a cover drive for four to get off the mark, he was clumsily stumped by Louis Mark Germishuys after lurching down the pitch to the off-spinning Brian Drew. After Mark Ramprakash's two-ball journey to the precipice of no return at the Wanderers, Crawley is set to play in the next test, but not necessarily at No 3 where Smith may yet make a return.

Of all the possibles, Alec

Stewart would probably be best suited to the role. His last Test fifty as an opening batsman for England was at Lord's against New Zealand, 16 months ago.

His dismissal here, bowled driving loosely at Stelling, was almost identical to the one in England's second innings in Johannesburg, where Brian McMillan forced a similar stutter in his footwork, a flaw that, until corrected, is likely to be

ruthlessly exploited by South Africa's new-ball bowlers.

In fact, only a breezy half-century from his Surrey teammate, Thorpe, and a hard-hitting cameo from Graeme Hick, that included a cleanly struck straight six off Drew, prevented England from losing out completely to the scenery. However, when both were out in quick succession, Russell took over with his now renowned

crab-with-a-spathe role, and the mountain view won out. DeFreitas, who had one or two points to prove in this match, looked uninterested until the second new ball. With Mike Watkinson already gone for 24, brilliantly caught out by a diving Stelling at short mid-off, he tormented England's tail with eight successive maidens. His only reward came after a disputable

dismissal for caught behind as his old Lancashire team-mate, Peter Martin, fended at a bouncer. This allowed Richard Illingworth to apply a dollop of his own brand of Russell-like adhesive before the close was 263-8. With the home side's spinners, Drew and Claude Henderson, sending down 63 of the 109 overs bowled, Illingworth will be in for an even stickier time today.

McGhee's resignation angers Leicester

Football

CATHERINE RILEY

Mark McGhee's appointment as manager of Wolves could be delayed following his controversial departure from Leicester yesterday. McGhee angered Leicester by rejecting a salary increase and resigned, along with his No 2, Colin Lee, and coach Mike Hickman.

Wolves - who could face a bill of up to £2.5m in legal fees pay-offs to their former manager Graham Taylor and coach Steve Harrison, and signing-on

costs for the Leicester trio - may delay an announcement until after Sunday's trip to Luton.

"If he goes to Wolves I hope they get relegated," Steve Walsh, the club captain said. "All the players are very upset. They want to prove to Mark that what he's done is wrong. We feel that what's happened is a disgrace."

Martin George, the Leicester chairman, said: "Mark would have been among the five best paid managers in the country. The board went over backwards to try to get him to stay - to a level that made some of us doubt our own wisdom."

Walsh, a Leicester player for 10 years, will take charge of

team affairs along with Chris Turner, Gary Parker and the youth team coach, David Nish, while Leicester begin seeking a new manager for the second time in a year.

Coventry City, who are currently at the bottom of the Premier League and 29m in debt, are to announce two new signings - one loan and one permanent - today. However, they have seen their bid to take Dave McPherson from Hearts on loan fall through due to the player's injury.

A group of six Manchester-based millionaires have com-

pleted talks for a proposed takeover of Portsmouth. The consortium, led by businessman Warren Smith, held a meeting with the managing director, Martin Gregory, son of the club's owner, Jim Gregory, and the takeover is set to go through before Christmas.

"We have had a favourable response from Mr Gregory in our offer to acquire the club and we hope to be able to make a formal announcement by Monday of next week," said Smith.

Birmingham are to request a public hearing in an effort to clear their name after being

charged by the FA with misconduct over crowd trouble at their match against Millwall last month. The First Division side could face a substantial fine, or even closure of their ground if the charge is proved.

Fulham and Gillingham have both been charged with misconduct by the FA following their game on 25 November. Ten players were booked and two sent off, and the referee's report to the FA described the last 10 minutes of the Division Three match as "the most disgraceful exhibition by professional footballers I have ever seen."

Duncan Ferguson has come to the attention of the police before and last night he did so again. A broken line of yellow-bibbed officers was strung around Goodison Park looking like it wished it was elsewhere. On an arctic night who could blame them?

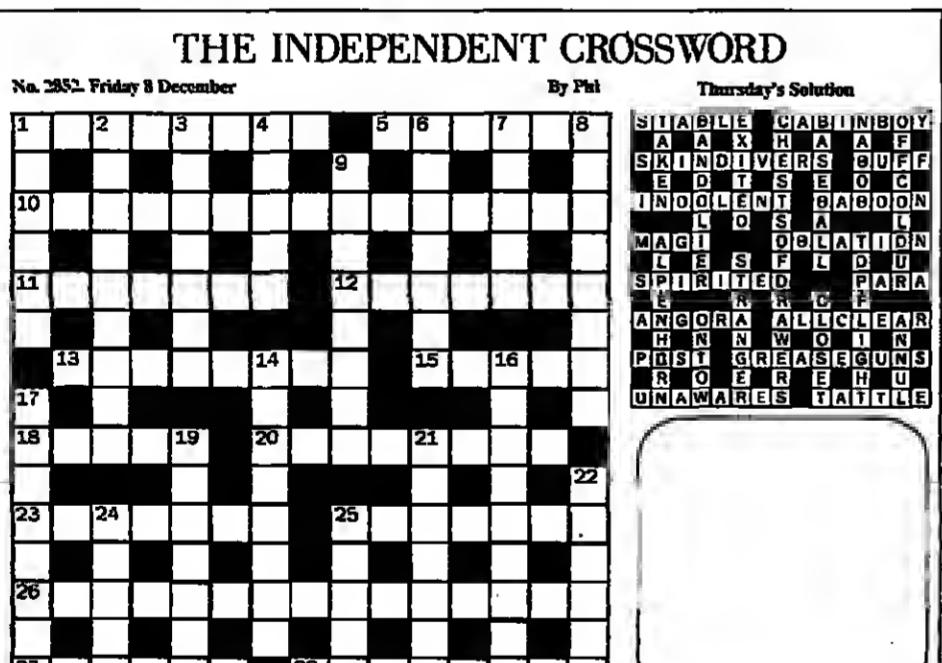
There is no doubt that Ferguson's 44-day jail sentence for assaulting a fellow player has elevated the Scottish striker to a status, in Evertonian minds, far beyond his feats on the field. "Duncan is innocent" tee-shirts have been doing a flourishing business.

Crowds flock to see return of Ferguson

GUY HODGSON

Duncan Ferguson has come to the attention of the police before and last night he did so again. A broken line of yellow-bibbed officers was strung around Goodison Park looking like it wished it was elsewhere. On an arctic night who could blame them?

Not the most famous release since "The Beatles' "Free As A Bird" had done anything to merit their attention. Some 10,000 people had come to see



ACROSS

- Opposing a good one this month? (7)
- How stupid can a board member be? (2,5,1,5)
- Come out to see them before inviting leader of gang in (6)
- Rash chap's going round Leeds after a riot (8)
- New women's group having split purpose? Not advisable (6)
- Distribution of beer to all that is easy to accept! (3)
- Be naughty? Would I, likewise, be naughty ultimately? (7)
- Bet securing high-class car would make you a happy character! (5)
- Company absorbed by one in rising Mediterranean city (7)
- Editor receiving pieces, has to edit (5)
- Keep principal one's invested in cash? (8)
- Electrical units - name used in SI here, possibly (7)
- A big star turning up for an Oscar? (5)
- Energy yonder - one source of luminosity in the heavens (8)
- Ale - one carrying bone disease (4,4)
- Another Phi? Means agonised discomfort, we hear (8)
- Struggling to retain European position with regard to a certain line (9)
- Make version of sharper English? (8)
- Forceful part of golf technique (7)
- Being cornered, runs, getting knocked about (7)
- Fires acceptable in revolutionary groups (6)
- Fool about with salt受け (5)
- English article is superior to the French passage (5)

Bates lets in Harding

The public feud between the chairman, Ken Bates, and the club's landlord, Matthew Harding, over the control of Chelsea moved behind closed doors at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

The club announced after a board meeting that the pair would lunch and sit together at tomorrow's home Premiership match against Newcastle. That implied Bates had agreed to lift the ban on Harding taking his seat in the directors' box and using the boardroom facilities, though both refused to comment before leaving the ground.

Now extensive discussions will take place in private to try to turn the public truce into a lasting peace. A statement from the club added: "Discussions are proceeding on the best way forward."

Harding had avoided a confrontation by watching games from the £5m North Stand he helped finance. He was, however, welcomed warmly into the directors' boxes at Leeds and Manchester United.

Bates, who has been suffering from pneumonia, has not attended a Chelsea game since 4 November. The pair had been at odds after Harding revealed he had resigned from the board of Chelsea Village, the club's parent company. He recognised that the row was a distraction from issues such as development of the south stand. Bates wants to accommodate a hotel, shops, offices and flats. Harding believes the investment in the team should take precedence.

Football's fastest goal claimed

GUY HODGSON AND LIZ SEARL

The statisticians will no doubt continue to disagree among themselves, but an Australian international by the name of Damian Mori has staked what could prove the best claim yet to the fastest goal in senior football history.

As Mori's team, Adelaide City, lined up for the start of Wednesday night's Australian National League match against Sydney United, the striker spotted the opposition goalkeeper, John Peros, off his line. From the kick-off Bradley Hasell passed to Mori, who promptly lobbed the ball over Peros and into the net. The goal was timed at four seconds.

Other goals have been recorded at four seconds (and indeed one at 3.5sec), but Mori may have the most legitimate claim as his goal was filmed, unlike most of those in the record books. There are also two instances in professional football of goals

said to have been scored after only four seconds. The match referee confirmed that time for Jim Fryatt's goal for Bradford Park Avenue against Trimbore in 1964, while off-pitch observers also recorded four seconds for Malcolm Macdonald's lob for Newcastle United in a friendly against St Johnstone in 1972.

At international level Bryan Robson has the rare distinction of holding two records for the fastest goal. His strike after 27 seconds for England against France in 1982 was the fastest goal recorded in the World Cup finals, while his 38-second effort against Yugoslavia in 1989 is the fastest recorded at Wembley.

Ray Spiller, of the Association of Football Statisticians, said that Cowperwaite's goal was generally recognised as the fastest in history. However, he said the arguments were likely to rage on because the football authorities have no system for officially recognising the time of goals.

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